

HOW ORAL HISTORY-THEOLOGY HAS FORMED THE PREACHING
MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY
FOR OREGON, IDAHO, AND UTAH

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To my best friend, my loving wife.

Thank you for your patient support.

Yet, in spite of damage done by admirers,
genuine expository preaching has behind it the power of the living God.

– Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*

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ABBREVIATIONS

- BDP:** Assembly Committee for Biblical Doctrine and Polity. This is a standing committee for the Church of God of Prophecy appointed by the General Overseer in consultation with the General Presbyters for a term of two-years.
- COG:** Church of God. A Pentecostal-Holiness organization with International Offices in Cleveland, Tennessee.
- COGOP:** Church of God of Prophecy. A Pentecostal-Holiness organization with International Offices in Cleveland, Tennessee. This organization was a part of the Church of God until the division occurring between the two bodies in 1923.
- DNA:** Deoxyribonucleic acid. It is used metaphorically in this project as the fundamental and distinctive characteristic of an organization, especially in regard to an unchangeable or identifiable trait.
- GCTS:** Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
- GO:** General Overseer. The highest ecclesiastical position in the COGOP.
- GP:** General Presbyter. Seven bishops that serve as a plurality of leaders along with the General Overseer to lead the International Ministry of the COGOP.
- IOU:** Idaho, Oregon, and Utah. This abbreviation directly refers to a specific region of the Church of God of Prophecy that is under one jurisdictional office and presbyterial oversight.
- OHT:** Oral History/Theology. This abbreviation will be used extensively to denote the oral history and theology of a movement, including its traditions, cultural identity, customs, and practices, as well as the theological mindset that is passed down through generations.

ABSTRACT

This project has a distinct purpose of presenting to the readers and researchers that peruse through the content a clear examination of Oral History/Theology as it has impacted and continues to affect the beliefs, practices, and preaching of ministers in the region of Idaho, Oregon, and Utah for the Church of God of Prophecy. From the outset, study and research was devoted to the overall formation of this mindset even in Pentecostal history. There was no intent to skewer any particular denomination or segment of Christianity, but to make an honest and transparent inquiry into how the oral history/theology of the *COGOP* took hold of the thinking of those called to preach the gospel in this specific region.

The methodology was to include a wide and diverse reading of *OHT* on a global scale, with special emphasis into how it took root in the Church of God of Prophecy and eventually effected the eventual outcome of the *COGOP* mindset. This study will include the results of a survey on the development of *IOU COGOP* preaching, including several factors that influenced how they learned homiletics. There will also be extensive interviews to open up dialogue where these ministers could express their feelings and the results of what they preached. It is designed further to open up a broader conversation among ministers as to why orators of the gospel deliver sermons the way they do.

CHAPTER ONE

EXPLORING THE PROBLEM

Introduction

This thesis began in my mind four years ago. It began as an unproved hypothesis that Oral History/Theology had been a strong influence and governing factor in the Church of God of Prophecy, but in particular the region of Idaho, Oregon and Utah. In my interactions with other ministers, conversations kept coming up about the origins of preaching as we discussed the calling and discipline of the ministry. The essence of this subject was further examined with my mentor in both the second and third year of doctoral study. I saw it as a project that needed to be explored and documented. Out of that exhaustive study came the following submission that hopefully will guide the *IOU COGOP* into better understanding of the past and present, while pursuing the future development of preaching in a methodology and spirit that would bring glory to God.

Years ago, a quote was filed away in my study that I shall never forget. Where it came from, I do not know, but who it came from is still vividly recalled. A French bishop named Jean Baptiste Massillon was quoted to have said, “I love a serious preacher, who speaks for my sake and not for his own; who seeks my salvation, and not his own vainglory. He best deserves to be heard who uses speech only to clothe his thoughts, and his thoughts only to promote truth and virtue. Nothing is more detestable than a professed declaimer, who retails his discourses as a quack does his medicine.” This is the challenge awaiting us in this thesis-project, not the criticism of the unlearned or a bygone day, but the value of discovering the life-giving benefits of truth and virtue. Therefore, launching

into a study of preaching requires honesty and understanding. In the end, may preaching be strengthened as we learn more about this sacred opportunity and responsibility.

The Problem and Its Settings

At the inception of this thesis, the driving purpose will be to demonstrate and defend the premise that Oral History-Theology has formed preaching in the region of Idaho, Oregon, and Utah for the Church of God of Prophecy. Oral History-Theology, hereafter abbreviated as *OHT*, will be used extensively to denote the oral history and theology of a movement, including its traditions, cultural identity, customs, and practices, as well as the theological mindset that is passed down through generations. This first section contains candid observations about the greater corpus of the Church of God of Prophecy (hereafter abbreviated as *COGOP*) and how reliance on oral history/theology inherent in its preaching ministry impacted it. Most specifically, I will address the region of Idaho, Oregon, and Utah (hereafter abbreviated as *IOU*). As I propose, the methodology utilized regarding the practice of preaching in the Church of God of Prophecy (*IOU*) did not occur within a vacuum limited only to this region.

Dr. T. R. Glover, a highly respected scholar on the early centuries of the Church, makes an insightful remark that "...one reason why Christianity conquered the world was that it did better thinking than the rest of the world. It not only knew better how to live and how to die: it also knew better how to think. It 'out-thought' the world."¹ This remark is precisely why this subject of Oral History-Theology and Preaching has drawn my interest. Because periodically there is evidence that the thinking of some Pentecostal

1. Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 148.

preachers lacks the proper foundation to demonstrate that we are *out-thinking* the world around us. Dr. Hector Ortiz notes this development when he states: “Spirituality can get mixed up very quickly and easily and end up being something far less than what God intended it to look like in our heart and body. It is sad when leadership cannot distinguish what is true spirituality and what is not.”² Therefore, this drift in spirituality may be detected in the preaching, and other leadership functions carried out by Pentecostal ministers, but most specifically for this thesis, in the history and theology of this movement in the IOU region.

The Challenge of Oral History/Theology in the COGOP

During the last 115 years of the history of the *COGOP* (formally known as the Church of God 1903-1923), there has been a distinctly stated dependency on the Word of God that also contained intensely underlying reliance on oral history/theology (hereafter abbreviated as *OHT*). While this might be debatable to some authorities within the *COGOP*, throughout my own eighteen years of tenure on the *COGOP*’s Assembly Committee for Doctrine and Polity (1996-2014), this practice of *OHT* shows up in written historical documents and joint meetings with the highest ecclesiastical presbyters. The *COGOP* General Presbytery was designed to assist the General Overseer in an attempt to implement the plurality of leadership in 1994.³ This attempt has been persistent and erratic as personality issues, and subtle agendas increased tensions that replicated historical tendencies back to the past *OHT* mindset. In retrospect, there are definite

2. Hector Ortiz, “Pentecostal Spirituality” (lecture, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Doctoral Cohort, Bessemer, AL, March 29, 2017).

3. Church of God of Prophecy, *Minutes: 88th Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1994), 155.

similarities in this present eight-member plurality group to the Twelve Elders adopted in 1916⁴ and the subsequent adopting of an Executive Council in 1922.⁵ Furthermore, note that the present General Presbytery of the *COGOP* has also elevated three bishops within their group as the Executive members since two of them serve in plurality along with the General Overseer.⁶ These points regarding this level of the presbytery substantiate the influence of oral history/theology in the greater corpus of *COGOP*.

Before moving into the specifics of the *IOU* Church of God of Prophecy, there must be a more in-depth examination of the influence of the *COGOP* International Assembly and the general body of this denomination and their subsequent impact over the overall mindset (*Grk. Phronesis*) in ministers and churches in the *IOU*. One pastor of thirty-four years in the *IOU* region observed, “There is no doubt we learned in my early years to preach and teach what we saw and heard in our Assemblies. In fact, if our prominent leaders from headquarters interpreted scriptures in a certain manner, we were expected to parrot their beliefs as our own.”⁷ The impact of this statement is made more forceful by a previous quote from the first General Overseer A. J. Tomlinson:

Who will be in the rapture as the Church of God, which is destined to be presented to Christ by Himself when He comes for His bride? Many believe He will get some here and some there from all the different churches and independent ‘saints.’ However, their opinions do not change the word of God. It remains that He will present the Church to Himself and does not say the good people of every church or no church...All of this finished, and just one church, under one government, and all subject to Christ in everything, which it takes to make the Church of God.⁸

4. C. T. Davidson, *Upon This Rock*, vol 1 (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1973), 465.

5. Davidson, *Upon This Rock*, 592.

6. Davidson, *Upon This Rock*, 592.

7. Robert J. Miller, “Reflections of Thirty Plus Years in the IOU Region,” *The Vision Sentinel*, Roseburg, OR, December 2017, 2.

8. Church of God of Prophecy, *The Body of Christ* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God of Prophecy, 1974), 72.

This thinking is what Pastor Miller was referencing in his writings.

While the above salient points refer to the development of leadership, the long tradition of *OHT* is of greater magnitude in the preaching ministry where annals of sermons reveal the same over-riding precedence of trust in oral declarations or statements. This trust in oral statements does not mean there is no reliance on the Word of God in *COGOP* homiletics, but certainly reflects a consistent habit of citing earlier written messages from *COGOP* Assemblies.⁹ The same corollary exists in the preaching at conferences, conventions, and local churches. For instance, the second General Overseer M. A. Tomlinson supported doctrinal positions that relied on quotes from sermons preached by his father, A. J. Tomlinson (the first General Overseer).¹⁰ Many of the original leaders in the *IOU* followed in this pattern and used their influence to maintain the prevalent *OHT*. Annual convention messages, circular letters and field sermons delivered by pastors and other prominent leaders who preached such history/theology as if it were per se “the pure doctrine” embraced by the *COGOP*, reinforced the traditional oral views of doctrine.¹¹ Many of the older *COGOP* ministers in the *IOU* region who adopted preaching exclusiveness and traditional ecclesiastical definitions of what constituted “the Church” confirmed this mindset. Later surveys revealed that not believing this interpretation invited criticism. I will introduce these surveys in chapter four.

9. Church of God of Prophecy, *Minutes: 89th Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1996), 97.

10. M. A. Tomlinson, *The Glorious Church of God* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1968), 88.

11. Church of God of Prophecy, *Lessons in Bible Training*, vol 3 (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House and Press, 1971), 187.

The insistence further exacerbated this influence of OHT that local churches on the field must adopt these messages or rulings that were adopted in the Assemblies of the *COGOP*, even when the preaching that inspired them led to their adoption into the corpus. Examination reveals that they had not always received legitimate exegetical study based on good hermeneutical practices. Statements like the following substantiated this: “We recommend that all ministers remain within the bounds of the decision of the Assembly, and they do not teach anything contrary to the teaching authorized by this body.”¹² Furthermore, part of that Assembly message that was passed on by *OHT* reiterated that fundamental belief and was heard preached over and over from A. J. Tomlinson: “I hope no one will get it in your mind that any other church is like the Church of God. No, this is His Church—the one Jesus built.”¹³ Because it was voiced annually and with such authority and zeal, this persuasion took over the mindset and preaching of *COGOP* ministers. This mindset was maintained by M. A. Tomlinson who preached in the Assembly of 1963, “Regardless of our reaction as individuals, the fact remains that we are the Church of God of the Bible.”¹⁴ The *IOU* did not escape this persistent influence. Those appointed to be bishops (that is, state or national overseers) were expected to herald the same message that had been regularly handed down through many generations that embraced these recognized interpretations of key doctrines, practices, and ecclesiastical policies. Pastor Miller wrote about the effect of this influence over the *IOU* pastors, “There was little choice as to how you would present the preaching

12. A. T. Wagner, *Church Business Guide*, 7th ed. (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1982), 7.

13. A. J. Tomlinson, *General Assembly Annual Addresses, 1928-1943*, vol. 3, Heritage Series (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing, 2011), 287.

14. Church of God of Prophecy, *Minutes: 58th Annual Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1963), 34.

and doctrinal decisions of the Assemblies for the *COGOP*. We knew that our state overseer would enforce the traditional approaches to Scripture strongly, so we complied to avoid receiving harsh rebukes or worse (being removed from our pulpits).”¹⁵

Further note specifically the immediate focus of this thesis project. Deeper examination is essential to explain and clarify how OHT became so prevalent in the *COGOP*. As we will note, A. J. Tomlinson was an over-shadowing personality of the Church of God (*COG*) and subsequently in the *COGOP*, which had similar roots in Cleveland, Tennessee. Having recognized this historical reality, Tomlinson was not without past influence on his beliefs and practices from his highly influential Quaker background and his predisposition toward the governmental structure of the United States of America. These two components cannot be ignored or abridged if one is to examine the influence of *OHT* seriously. From his earliest days, A. J. Tomlinson grew up under the influence of Quakers from his grandparents, parents, the Westfield Academy (he attended), as well as to other holiness stimuli from related ministries like Frank Sanford.¹⁶ While Tomlinson shed some of this early religious training, his beliefs remained heavily influenced by them, and he freely implanted them in the *COG* and the *COGOP*. On the other hand, he loved the political structure of the United States government, duplicating several characteristics of it through the use of banners in conventions and assemblies.¹⁷ Tomlinson also replicated some of its structure into the upper echelons of the church’s government since he often cited the splendid government

15. Miller, “Reflections,” 3.

16. Stanley M. Burgess, ed., *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2003), 1143-1144.

17. Lillie Duggar, *A. J. Tomlinson: Former General Overseer of the Church of God* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1964), 558-559.

of his beloved nation.¹⁸ For instance, he uses the term government twenty times about the church within only four pages of his book called *God's Pioneer*.¹⁹ These unique characteristics of Tomlinson made inroads into the *COGOP* and eventually into the *IOU* by the late 1930's and the early 1940's. The Oregon State Convention program for that time period reveals a similar exhortation to both the use of banners and sermons titles reflecting subjects on government.²⁰

While I will focus more closely in the next few chapters on how oral history-theology has formed preaching in the *IOU* region for the *COGOP*, one cannot ignore the existence of *OHT* throughout Pentecostalism. This persuasion was not isolated to the *COGOP*, but there is ample evidence that it existed prior to this movement and conversely manifested itself in other nations and denominational structures. Nowhere is this seen more acutely than in Africa in the image of a 'Big Man' as the iconic leader. His persona identified his dress and lifestyle that was crucial in his representing a composite culture where *kukhwima* (ripened or empowered person) could have such sway over the indigenous people.²¹ Much of African Pentecostalism was influenced by this thinking that simply adopted this practice. In reflecting on *OHT*, American Pentecostalism was adopting and passing along the 'Big Man' syndrome with many Pentecostal leaders who mesmerized or held sway with their dynamic personalities. Forthrightly, this same interpretive process can be seen in the *COGOP* where the General Overseer took on a mystique or spiritual aura that gave the Tomlinsons' unlimited authority via the General

18. Tomlinson, *General Assembly Annual Addresses 1928-1943*, 13.

19. A. J. Tomlinson, *God's Pioneer*, vol 4, Heritage Series (1962; repr., Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2012), 58-61.

20. William G. Harden, *Oregon State Convention Program* (Prineville, OR: Tomlinson Church of God of Oregon, 1942), 2-3.

21. Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism, An Introduction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 112-113.

Overseer's Annual Addresses (doctrinal or polity-oriented sermons) in the General Assemblies.²²

Adding to this Pentecostal milieu, Larry Pate introduced the concept of 'Missionary Blindness' where missionaries "received inadequate training concerning the realities and the implications of cultures before going into the field."²³ Evangelical and Pentecostal missionaries assumed the gospel would spread rapidly if the indigenous could be trained. However, the gospel often spread in one group but not with other groups. Again, a similar "blindness" led to the recruiting in the *COGOP* of ministers, and most especially overseers that also had unlimited power in their respective states, regions or nations. My own father, R. V. Lee Pratt, pastored fifty-five years in the *COGOP* believing and preaching all he heard exhorted in the General Assemblies, even though he was illiterate and relied on me as a young boy (beginning at age eight) to read scriptures to him from the Bible.

Another offshoot of *OHT* was received with mixed results. African historian Ogbu Kalu writes: "By turning the Bible into canon of tribal history and weaving it into the indigenous worldview...Pentecostals directly address the problems of evil forces in numerous ways."²⁴ They had hoped this would help establish the same covenantal structure, but it often did so at a cost to lifting primal wicked spirits. Many leaders hoped the vast quantities of literature would expose evil forces; this too was not always the case. They felt it would constitute historical agents empowered to do battle against all these

22. Church of God of Prophecy, *General Assembly Minutes 1906-1914* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1992), 124.

23. Walter Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1997), 300.

24. Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 183.

evil forces. Last, indeed, public testimonies would help as the works and victory over these former agents of the spirits were witnessed by the people. Tragically, some of these became influential and misled new converts to follow them.²⁵ While not exactly of the same variety, this strong reliance on *OHT* created a platform where ambitious and mysterious leaders could rise and lead many away from the *COGOP*. This act has been repeated throughout this movement's history and in the rise and departure of several prominent faces.²⁶ When attempts have been made to move away from past *OHT*, this action often led to schisms that in one specific case led a dissenter to declare that there was a war rising on the horizon of the *COGOP*.²⁷ While the *COGOP* has undoubtedly made attempts to move away from the many past negative *OHT* influences, there are still vestiges of it that linger strongly in its DNA.

There is still another danger of *OHT* that has emerged; namely, Pentecostal hermeneutics as it applies to subjectivism and female exegetes. As the indigenous cultures rose up to challenge the old interpretations of male theologians, there surfaced a belief that feminists could read the Bible and place on it a different interpretation from their perspective.²⁸ Subsequently, there arose thinking that if a specific subject arose from a female perspective, it required a 'female experiential, social, and cultural background' to bring light to this particular subject. This thinking has divided communities, churches and leaders who feel that it is too exclusive or biased in performing sound hermeneutics.²⁹ Even so, Aimee Semple McPherson captured this strange magnetism by

25. Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 183.

26. C. Eldon McNabb, "Ask the Bible Guys." The Bible Guys Breakfast Club, August 2001, Retrieved July 9, 2018, <http://www.tpot.org/BibleGuys/Aug2001/Mexico.shtml>.

27. Wade H. Phillips, *God, The Church and Revelation* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1986), 118-119.

28. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, 321.

29. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, 321.

her unique presentation of Pentecostalism.³⁰ Conversely, in the *COGOP* a strong, charismatic female voice was sometimes utilized to give added credibility to traditional *OHT* interpretations.³¹

Such incongruities in global Pentecostalism and charismaticism may highlight the danger of entrusting too much reliance on *OHT*. In North American Pentecostalism, we have embraced and preserved some anomalies in our *OHT* that seem strange to ‘Third World’ Christians. As P.D. Hocken states,

Just as the renewing work of the Holy Spirit reveals the active Lordship of Jesus the Messiah, so it also restores a sense of divine purpose to the church. Charismatic hubris can easily exaggerate our human understanding of God’s unfolding purpose and have too narrow a view of the work of the Holy Spirit. But the renewed sense that God is moving in history and the church toward the climax of the Lord’s return and his kingdom is surely central to God’s purpose...³²

If this cautionary word applies to other global cultures, it also applies to the *COGOP* in the IOU region. On the other hand, issues that seem to divide because of the inclusion of *OHT*, may turn out helpful and quicken the work of the Christ, as well as perform a service that past theologies or histories of the early reformers could not do alone.

While this thesis will candidly explore the weaknesses of *OHT*, the above observation requires a parley into the strengths that have come through *OHT* in the *COGOP*. There is no question that *OHT* has preserved and fostered the strong emphasis on holiness, speaking in tongues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, interracial harmony, diversity of leadership, youth and women’s ministries and corporate fellowship and stewardship in the *COGOP*. Isaac Canales referenced some of these attributes without

30. Burgess, *The New International Dictionary*, 57.

31. Church of God of Prophecy, *Minutes: 71st Annual Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1976), 104.

32. Church of God of Prophecy, *Minutes: 71st Annual Assembly*, 519.

realizing that the wholesome elements of OHT preserved many of these qualities. He writes, “You (The Church of God of Prophecy) are the most ethnically mixed church I have ever preached to; quit being afraid and go and tell the people what God is doing.”³³ This is further qualified by J. D. Douglas who adds, “The Church of God of Prophecy has a high percentage of female pastors and may be the church most racially inclusive at all levels in the U.S.A.”³⁴ This discourse is not intended to boast regarding the *COGOP* but is intended to demonstrate that there are elements of *OHT* that have had significant value and influence. This movement has indeed been blessed by the legacy and many positive contributions of A. J. Tomlinson. No criticism can be justified that detracts from this rich heritage.

Before moving forward, many scholars have cited equal appreciation to the generational benefits of *OHT* when the negative aspects can be reduced or moved away from within a church body. There are many issues that will test *OHT*, such as the prosperity teaching, the role of women, post-modern social concerns, tele-evangelism, the Baptism in the Spirit with speaking in tongues, and the outbreak of charismatic phenomena.³⁵ There are many reasons to appreciate some of the positive effects of *OHT*. If there is one thing that Pentecostalism must not do is to abandon the good effects and positive growth that *OHT* has produced. Vinson Synan cautioned,

Many Pentecostal scholars, historians, and theologians felt that the Pentecostals paid a steep price by becoming so close to the mainline evangelicals. In order to gain acceptance, they charged, the Pentecostals changed their original theological base to include many features that were not native to Pentecostal theological

33. Isaac Canales, “Introducing the Church of God of Prophecy” (PowerPoint presented at City Vision University Evangelism Conference, Kansas City, MO, September 1, 1995).

34. J. D. Douglas, *New 20th Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Co., 1991), 196.

35. William K. Kay and Anne E. Dyer, *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies* (St. Albans Place, London: SCM Press, 2004), 238-239.

culture and tradition. As a result, there was a slow decline in the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit in many Pentecostal churches and a closer alliance with the political positions advocated by the Christian right.³⁶

Synan has a legitimate observation because many abuses within *OHT* do not justify the dismissal of some of the overwhelming contributions to evangelism and even theology by this classic expression of Pentecostalism.

While many evangelical church leaders complain or attack typical *OHT* Pentecostalism, because of the emphasis on the holiness lifestyle, this has only exasperated Pentecostal leaders who can clearly see the world's negative impact on the Church and the need for true revival and repentance.³⁷ This section could not be complete without recognition of several key factors that *OHT* has been resilient in keeping before Christendom. First, younger Pentecostal churches are appalled at the ordaining of homosexuals and softening of holiness standards in Western non-Pentecostal churches (since many of these churches are crumbling to secular ideas).³⁸ In addition, *OHT* church leaders have been prominent in the belief of the three distinct persons of trinitarian theology.³⁹ But, these positive contributions of *OHT* cannot be endorsed to the point that they ignore or understate the negative influences of *OHT* upon the *COGOP* and other movements within Pentecostalism. The postscript should simply add that churches that practice a firm *OHT* tradition have been effective at dealing with beliefs that can invade

36. Vinson Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 351.

37. Kay and Dyer, *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies*, 130.

38. Vinson Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit*, 375.

39. Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 221.

Christian practices and dilute the impact that “have had an unexpected modernizing influence on the life of the individual.”⁴⁰

Definition of the Challenge

Further dissection of this subject of “How Oral History-Theology Has Formed Preaching in the *IOU* Region for the Church of God of Prophecy” is necessary. To do so, we must readily confess that there are three false assumptions made concerning the entire subject of *OHT*. In this opening chapter, this study demonstrates a recognition that *OHT* is not just a Third World phenomenon. This first assumption is not accurate since it exists even in the church context of North America and Europe. This is notably documented throughout this project regarding the *COGOP* (most explicitly in the *IOU*). The second assumption is that it is inferior to written systematic theology or history, which through scriptural study and experiential evidence does not support such a dogmatic claim. The third is that *OHT* will undermine the reliable witness of scripture and church leadership. The error of these three assumptions is apparent as honest scrutiny is done on this subject. As we launch deeper into this project paper, I concur with the experience of John: “that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).⁴¹ *OHT* is very important to the survival and evangelization of the gospel but requires churches and ministers also to recognize and deal with those negative

40. Stephen D. Glazier, *Perspectives on Pentecostalism: Case Studies from the Caribbean and Latin America* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1980), 67.

41. All scripture citations are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

elements of abuse, misuse, and departure from the Word of God and the genuine message of the Holy Spirit.

This belief in the Word and Spirit is expressed most appropriately by Amos

Yong:

Thus a pneumatological theology of the liturgy recognizes the necessity of the Spirit quickening the word of Christ in order to give life to the people of God. When this happens...This is what Pentecostals often call the '*rhēma* word,' which speaks God's word anew and afresh to the here-and-now situation of the believer and the believing community. This certainly occurs in the contemporary sermon, the central form of kerygmatic proclamation of the living word of Christ by the power of the Spirit.⁴²

Still, reading Yong's challenge, I witnessed in *COGOP* preaching a lack of spiritual theology that disciplines and implants the whole truth into daily living of their members.

Indeed, the theologian Chan has a legitimate challenge to preachers that states,

We see how spiritual theology finds its eventual application into individual Christians who are uniquely guided into a living organism, the church, by a personal process of traditioning in which something more than ideas is transmitted. Spiritual theology finds its fulfillment in direction, just as biblical study finds its true end in the preaching of the Word. One is not complete without the other.⁴³

The above two quotes reveal a remarkable lack of maturity and growth of congregants that has stymied church membership in North America, including *COGOP* churches where often there is little consistent and stable growth.⁴⁴ This biblical illiteracy does not line-up to the stated degree of belief by preachers that they embrace and preach the Bible as a verifiable source of knowledge for their people. Therefore, the preacher's

42. Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out*, 161.

43. Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 238-239.

44. Richard J. Krejcir, "Statistics, and Reasons for Church Decline." Institute of Church Leadership Development, 2007, Retrieved July 7, 2018, <http://www.churchleadership.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=42346>.

audience is not maturing, and their discipleship is neglected; a situation that I have observed in much of the North American *COGOP*. Chan surmises,

But there are dangers in a too narrowly defined Christological spirituality. It can become too individualistic and can be turned into a system to support self-indulgence. The corporate life could become a purely voluntary and dispensable matter. The all-important issue is 'my own personal relationship with Jesus Christ.' All other relationships become secondary.⁴⁵

I concur that preaching must have a goal to mature members beyond ecclesiastical indoctrination and *OHT* has sometimes impeded this process even in the *IOU* region.

Leading us into a fuller spectrum of preaching, the warning by Chan one more time calls us to our divine proclamation. He adds,

Baptism incorporates new members into the body of Christ and the Eucharist [*communion*, my insert] reveals the communal nature of the Christian life (Acts 2:43-47). It is there that 'the essence of the church itself is alive, present, and effective.' The sermon must be seen within the larger context of the church's life, which is essentially Eucharistic. Preaching should point to and confirm that specific life, not take on a life of its own. In the case of modern preaching, everything largely depends on the skill, personality, and performance of the preacher.⁴⁶

Before we turn to this examination of preaching, our regional office archives for Oregon, Idaho, and Utah (*IOU*) have unearthed some disturbing violations of this Eucharistic or communal nature in the *COGOP*. Almost half of our churches do not have regular communion observed, rarely baptize converts, neglect business meetings, do not utilize a discipleship catechism, and the majority do not receive new members by some form of covenantal process.⁴⁷

45. Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 47.

46. Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 112.

47. Cherry Daniels, *The IOU Ministerial Reporting Archives* (Salem, OR: Church of God of Prophecy, 2018).

In further defining this thesis, Duvall and Hays give tremendous advice to young preachers in their textbook for preachers: “We study Scripture not just to learn more *about* God, but to *know and love God more*. He gave us his Word not just to fill our brains with biblical facts, but to change our lives. The plain intention of the divine Author is that we would *grasp* his Word by understanding it and applying it.”⁴⁸ This rightly introduces the exploration of the preacher and exhortation. In the surveys (which we will reference in chapter four), *IOU* ministers were queried about preaching and asked to identify their personality in dealing with people and how they thought others in their congregation would view their temperament in preaching.⁴⁹ Naturally, most viewed themselves in their dealings with their congregation as extroverted or outgoing. The fact that the highest number rated themselves as relational was encouraging, although I believe that to be more of a desired trait than reality. Conversely, their responses for how others viewed them while they were preaching was like a shotgun blast of answers; it was all over the spectrum. Later dialogue with them, in the *IOU* State Biblical Institutes (more details in chapter four), exposed that many of them are suffering from a postmodern effect of congregations that are not always very engaged in sermons because the preacher’s messages contain too many references to the *COGOP* history or theology passed on to ministers for generations.

A very informative textbook regarding the Word and personality states: “Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of the passage in its

48. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2005), 223.

49. See Appendix 1.

context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher; applies to the hearers.”⁵⁰ This is a poignant statement, for personality is not only the work of the Holy Spirit within the preacher, but it is also the perception of the audience that is not always Spirit-focused. As I mused over Calvin Miller’s observation about personality, it brought to mind another reason why the temperament in preaching can have a positive effect. He writes,

...the guide must know the way personally and intimately in order to lead others in it. This is why traditional spiritual direction has always placed the greater emphasis on the personal quality of the director. First, he needs to know himself, and to do this he needs to cultivate intimacy with others through spiritual friendship. A director is not merely a resource person who provides information for others. He must be a fellow traveler along the way. Second, he must be humble. A director is constantly tempted to bask in directees’ adulation.⁵¹

Henceforth, Pentecostal preaching must include more than just an outgoing or extroverted personality. It must entwine the congregation within a relational atmosphere where the speaker and audience are melted together into a spiritual journey.

Still, a fuller definition of this thesis will require an honest confession about how *OHT* managed to hold such sway over preaching. It frequently emphasized personality-driven sermons at the expense of sound exegetical study and presentation. Emphasis on Holy Spirit’ anointing seems to outweigh the importance of sound hermeneutics. Fred B. Craddock countered with this guidance: “Any doctrine of the Holy Spirit that relieves me of any of my responsibility is false doctrine. Part of the complexity of the subject of

50. Calvin Miller, *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 232.

51. Miller, *Preaching*, 237.

preaching has to do with a large body of fictions and prejudices that accumulate around preaching as they do around all human relationships and all communication.”⁵²

The *OHT* of the *COGOP* has embraced powerful, dynamic and Spirit-filled preaching, yet in doing so, the minister may be prone to rely on his or her reliance on past knowledge and experience. Some preaching scholars like to emphasize this practice. House and Garland, for instance, state, “The difference is not always a matter of spirituality. One also needs to possess and develop natural abilities, including the capacities to think clearly and speak frankly and forcefully. A good speaker does not mumble but enunciates every word.”⁵³ Also, the complete understanding is noted by the same authors who add this subsequent precautionary:

Spirit-filled preaching, then, occurs when you, a regenerate individual, proclaim the word of God, under His control. It is *anointed* in that the Holy Spirit in your life *is* God’s anointing (see 1 John 2:27). This does not nullify your unique personality and style, nor does it render unnecessary your diligence as a student or your responsibility to maintain your ‘walk in the Spirit’ (Galatians 5:16, 25).⁵⁴

Therefore, Holy Spirit control certainly brings about relational preaching, but it is always exegetically supported and accurately conveyed that permits such elucidations to have God’s authority.

Process of Statistical Research Relevant to the Issue

I have found much information regarding *OHT* that I will delve into in chapter 3, but the method of research has been exhaustive and gleaned from three major statistical

52. Fred B. Craddock, *Craddock on the Craft of Preaching* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2011), 118.

53. H. Wayne House and Daniel G. Garland, *God’s Message, Your Sermon: Discover, Develop, and Deliver What God Meant by What He Said* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 42.

54. House and Garland, *God’s Message*, 41.

studies. First, there will be an inclusion of exploratory research and conclusive research. While I will use a host of scholars and writers who explored the subject of *OHT* and its influence on preaching in various global cultures, this thesis will require a well-structured and systematic design. To be done adequately, I must gather information from many resources (books and research articles) that identify the existence of *OHT*, as well as documenting its prevailing implications on the entire Pentecostal world. To give the study authenticity and specificity, I intend through the various methodology to examine the Church of God of Prophecy *OHT* to demarcate its inception and development from the beginning.

Secondly, Bryan Auday's lectures⁵⁵ provided an excellent formula going forward that will inform my use of homiletical and historical documents to utilize for a comparative model for my research. I will be examining and citing surveys, interviews and an in-depth live videotape transcript with *COGOP's* official historian (permission for this has already been granted in writing).

Thirdly, I intend to use a combination of quantitative and qualitative categories of research. Above all other factors in this thesis, there must be a firm reliance on fundamental research because several disciplines will work together to solve problems that generate from a study of preaching in such a unique context as *OHT* in my region. Research will be acutely applied as it relates to this specific Pentecostal expression impacted by times gone by and the cultures of the various points of origin within their unique context. Furthermore, measurement of these responses will take into consideration

55. Bryan Auday, "DMin Research Methodology, Modules One and Two," South Hamilton, MA: The Apereo Foundation, 2003-2018, accessed May 1, 2018, <https://sakai.gcts.edu/portal/site/90032/tool/e5836740-9b08-45b4-b252-fd26f0dca55a>.

the variables and the implications of an over-riding seed of origin, so as not to impugn the results of the survey instrument. As mentioned earlier, other reading sources will be consulted as a foundation for my research for this thesis. These sources will reveal comparisons and understanding of the entire subject of *OHT* and its implications globally. This reading will be used to discern comparisons and differences to the *COGOP* oral history/theology in the *IOU* region.

Due to the nature of my proposal, it was apparent early on that it would have to contain both quantitative and qualitative categories. First, in the quantitative category, an instrument would be developed using questions that participants can answer by simply checking one of four or five responses. Secondly, in the qualitative research, attention will be given to identifying, describing and resolving problems revealed by the surveys. Great care will be taken in the collection of data and the privacy of all participants. Surveys were mailed to each of the 100 participants for the Church of God of Prophecy in the *IOU* region of Idaho, Oregon, and Utah, with an expected response of a minimum of at least eighty pastors. A copy of these surveys will be included in chapter four. Ministers are not required to write any answers out, but merely check boxes in four or five categories. A preprinted address label for my office will be provided, so no writing style or spelling can identify them. No return address is to be included on their envelope. Since the surveys will be mailed in three languages (English, Spanish, and Russian), three questions have been prepared to identify race, gender, range of age, and cultural origin. These surveys are being sent back anonymously on a pre-set numbered form so that no one can duplicate or share with another. There will be a fixed period of no more than four weeks for them to return forms to retain control and assure submission. A neutral and

confidential agent has been recruited to compile, categorize, and record all the results of the surveys. Several questions will be utilized to identify feelings, emotions and other unqualifiable elements. The results can inform this thesis of those who influenced them most in their spiritual and ministerial formation. All surveys will have twenty-one questions and do not require an extensive explanation for the participant to understand or equivocate in giving an honest answer. One of the critical components of this selected methodology is to ask straightforward questions that identify the impact of *OHT* on our pastors and their preaching habits, styles and content. The instrument we have chosen to use is being well-crafted to detect these peculiarities through well-formulated questions that yield simple answers.

Because this thesis will also identify follow-up questions, obstacles or problems that need to be addressed more clearly, I did interviews with twenty participants among this group that will agree by their own volition to dialogue with me about this subject of *OHT*. Dialoguing will be done randomly from among the participants gleaned from all four language groups. The unidentified will agree to the personal interview, and they (as well as myself) will sign a confidentiality and consent document to approve publication of material from the interview. This additional area of methodology will give me confidence as I move forward in this project to the final writing of summaries and conclusions. There is no doubt that these interviews will benefit greater understanding of the pastors in the IOU region and afford better clarity on how much they were influenced by oral communication in their family, church, and ministry. In addition, it will assist in providing better ongoing homiletical and theological training for them, since two-thirds of in the *IOU COGOP* pastors have no formal education beyond high school.

Because quantitative research deals with only a collection of numerical data, where a summary and inferences of the data is gathered, I want to explore the other factors that can only be understood through evaluation of qualitative research. Therefore, after the surveys are received and the twenty interviews completed, research will include one more pivotal aspect. I have approached and received permission to do a videotaped interview of Bishop Adrian Varlack, the officially appointed *COGOP* historian. He is widely acclaimed to be the most knowledgeable person in our denomination on the *COGOP* history, theology, and traditions. He is fluent in three languages, served on our International Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee for ten years, served as our World Mission Director for twenty-five years, and his home of origin is the British Virgin Islands. These factors give him an exceptional understanding of *OHT* within the *COGOP*. This interview was completed in Boise, Idaho. With his supervision, it was made into a transcript that could be cited without concern of misquoting or giving a distorted perception to his comments. Careful attention has been given to do this intensive interview at a neutral site to yield clearer understanding in this exploratory research. Also, enquiry will aid in testing my own formulated hypothesis, as well as theoretical or applied implications. There will be both exploratory and conclusive research emerging from this extended interview that will either inform or question the survey results. The subsequent interviews conducted with twenty pastors from the *IOU COGOP* region will confirm or refute Varlack's response.

Summary to the Challenge

Before closing this first chapter, there is a need to include more about *orality* as it relates to biblical times of the first century and its correlation to the twentieth and twenty-

first centuries. Early on in the Jewish culture, orality was a normal process of communication. Historical elements, communal traditions, and holy writings were memorized in great detail. Oral communication held a special place in society, and those who could recite it verbatim were highly respected. Craig Keener makes a vital historical observation:

By Jesus' day, much of the Mediterranean world was literate as well as oral, but even at this time only a minority could read, especially on a formal level, and orality remained an important part of the larger culture. Memory cultivation is particularly emphasized in oral cultures, and there remained a bias toward orality and oral memory in the first century world.⁵⁶

Having recognized this first century use of orality, we cannot be deceptively influenced to believe that over the last few centuries that this sacred art of memorization of the Word, theology or history has been preserved in the same judicious or conscientious manner. Keener, while diving deeper into this subject of orality, admits that “Ancient Mediterranean culture valued orality more than modern western culture does.”⁵⁷ As time progressed, orality was being abandoned even in the so-called ancient biblical cultures, but in the early twentieth century it deteriorated into a different form that made it less sacred and reliable. Macchia writes, “Pentecostals were not the only Christians outside of the West or in the southern hemisphere who approached theology through oral discourse...but Pentecostals were emerging in that part of the world as a major voice and an outstanding example of experiential and oral theologizing.”⁵⁸ Although Macchia endorses and clarifies the use of oral theologizing, he later acknowledges that it must

56. Craig S. Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 140.

57. Keener, *The Historical Jesus*, 161.

58. Frank Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 51.

contain a systematic theological discourse that “urges one to reflect on the coherence of truth...”⁵⁹ Even so, moving forward from this point, we cannot equate the present use of *OHT* with the ancient art forms that were practiced with a higher degree of sacred discipline and most certainly prior to the entire canonization of Scripture.

Mott sums up well how my thesis will seek to document the influence of *OHT* on the *COGOP*: “Human personality develops through the process of encounter in culture. We become aware of our own existence as we experience ourselves and see the results of our activity in the attitudes and responses of those with whom we are in close reciprocal relationship.”⁶⁰ In light of this observation about “close personal relationship,” I believe this thesis can contribute to further study of *OHT* and be beneficial in future adjustments and training of leaders in the *COGOP* and explicitly in the *IOU* region. Through various cultural backgrounds in Global Pentecostalism, the evidence of *OHT* is historically recorded; an element that will be highlighted in chapter 3 of this project.

This project will aid in documenting *OHT*’s place and influence in the *COGOP* and in particular the *IOU*. While recognizing positive facets of its contribution to this movement, it will be essential to examine the detrimental aspects of *OHT* within the *COGOP* (in particular the *IOU* region). As Willis C. Hoover explained long ago, “The reading of the Word must always have preeminence over any manifestation of the Spirit. Those under the power of the Spirit are never *out of it*. ‘The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets’ (1 Corinthians 14:32).”⁶¹ Sustained by this quote is the reality

59. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 53.

60. Stephen Charles Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*, 2nd ed., (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 102-103.

61. Willis Collins Hoover, *History of the Pentecostal Revival in Chile* (Santiago, Chile: I.E.P. Corporation Publishing House, 2000), 227.

that much of what has been preached and taught in the *COGOP* relied on an *OHT* that did not align itself with sound hermeneutical disciplines. While serving on the Assembly Committee for Doctrine and Polity (*BDP*), I witnessed first-hand the debacle in 1998. Even after diligent and careful exegetical study had been researched for more than two years, the delicate subject of “Exclusivity of the Ecclesia” was not allowed on the floor of the *COGOP* International Assembly. The General Overseer and the Administrative Committee arbitrarily removed the report of the *BDP*⁶² because of fear of a backlash by those who held to the oral tradition for ‘exclusiveness’ regarding the *COGOP* (as the only church that was the body of Christ). As R. Finnegan rightly states, “Suffice it to say that although there is justification for continued use of the terms oral and orality, they are not without complexities and problems and must be used with clarity and nuance.”⁶³

62. Clayton Martin, *Minutes of the Assembly Committee on Biblical Doctrine and Polity, July 21, 1998* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God of Prophecy Archives, 1998), 1.

63. R. Finnegan, “Orality and Oral Transmission: Introduction,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, 2nd ed., ed. Joel B. Green (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 641.

CHAPTER TWO

VARIOUS ASPECTS OF ORAL HISTORY/THEOLOGY

The great Christian historian Justo L. Gonzalez makes an observation that cannot be overlooked as we begin this section. He states,

The modern age brought with it issues and perspectives very different from any that the church had faced before. Until that time, it was generally agreed that whatever is older is usually better than an innovation, but the spirit of modernity moved in the opposite direction. Truth was not in the past, but in the future—in some golden age that humankind would eventually achieve by means of innovation, invention and progress.¹

By this one brief statement, a great historical scholar had summed up the global phenomenon that has shaken Christianity to the core.

In a series of phrases, Macchia gives us a myriad of ways to recognize *OHT* from other forms of theology; these include ‘narrative interpretation,’ ‘participatory understanding,’ ‘contextually inspired,’ ‘reciprocal relationships,’ ‘Spirit baptism,’ ‘extraordinary powers,’ ‘empowered witness,’ and various forms of dance, songs, casting out of evil spirits, prophecy and speaking in tongues.² No other history of Christianity can match the diversity of Pentecostalism; this new phenomenon would establish a different theology. For good or bad, *OHT* has shaped the past and future of Pentecostalism, as well as in the *IOU* region of the Church of God of Prophecy. Macchia’s description of *OHT* would certainly be applicable in the *IOU* region where many of the aforementioned characteristics are seen in every cultural setting.

1. Justo L. González, *A Concise History of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), 203.

2. Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 53-59.

The Global Phenomenon and Influence of Oral History/Theology

Anderson and Tang provide an excellent description of the overwhelming nature of Spirit Baptism:

Pentecostalism can flourish anywhere in the world; that Pentecostalism is nothing other than Christianity in the form of ‘primal religion’ which comes to the surface wherever the subjects of religion are more or less left to themselves and to their fight for decent life in a hostile and threatening environment, and where there are no forces strong enough to regulate, control, tame, and refine the elemental human religious impulse.³

No one definition can exceed this truth. None other than Walter Hollenweger gave a further notation on how *OHT* coincides with the Pauline doctrine of the Holy Spirit:

In addition to the charisms which are known in the history of Pentecostalism, such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, religious dancing, and praying for the sick, they practice the gifts of demonstrating, organizing and publicizing. These are considered as another form of prophecy. I have known black Pentecostal churches in which activities were explicitly mentioned in a list of gifts of the Spirit.⁴

This thesis does not entail any personal surveys of African leadership, although it will contain in chapter four an in-depth survey of the *IOU* region that includes multiplicities of cultures. Even so, no serious study of *OHT* can legitimately ignore the origin and influence present in the African context. As Ogbu Kalu states in referring back to Azusa Street, “...the story line ignores the clues from different regions that the same Holy Spirit started the process by manifesting itself to believers all over the whole inhabited earth without deference to any single geographical source.”⁵ Later on, Ogbu sustains this early origin with a direct reference to an African leader named William

3. Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang, eds., *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Eugene, OR: WIPF & Stock Publishers, 2011), 353.

4. Walter Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1997), 27.

5. Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism, An Introduction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 14.

Wade Harris who demonstrated a vibrant *OHT* in his ministry. “He imaged himself as an Old Testament prophet, a hybrid of Elijah and John the Baptist, whose mission was to call people to repentance...In 1913, he trekked through the Ivory Coast to the Gold Coast catalyzing an effective evangelical revival based on prophecy and healing.”⁶ The new emerging *OHT* is explored more deeply by Ogbu when he writes,

The emphases are on the experiential, relational, emotional, oral aspects of faith; the immediacy of the text; and the freedom to interpret and appropriate the multiple meanings of the biblical texts. It recognizes a spiritual kinship between the authors and readers and ongoing continuity with the New Testament church by pneumatic illumination. Personal and corporate experiences are woven into the hermeneutical task.⁷

This is a strong argument for the integration of oral theology whether it occurs in Africa or within the Church of God of Prophecy in the *IOU* region.

Allan Anderson, in researching how this new approach to the gospel occurred, gives an insightful observation:

Pentecostals responded to what they experienced as a void left by a rationalistic western form of Christianity which had unwittingly initiated what was tantamount to the destruction of their cherished spiritual values by seeking to separate ‘healing’ from ‘religion’ and secularizing it. Pentecostals declared a message that reclaimed ancient Biblical traditions of healing and protection from evil and demonstrated the practical effects of these traditions. This resonated well with meeting their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, offering solutions to life’s problems and ways to cope in a threatening and hostile world.⁸

He has accented the reason why Pentecostalism has multiplied exponentially in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This was one of the key points made by Julia Young about *Latino Pentecostals in America* and the attraction that Azusa had to African-Americans and Latinos:

6. Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism, An Introduction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37.

7. Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 267.

8. Anderson and Tang, *Asian and Pentecostal*, 157.

From the beginning, Latino converts to Pentecostalism served as pastors and leaders within their own communities, Seymour himself ordained a number of the first Latino ministers, who would go on to begin independent churches and ministries in Southern California and beyond... Their religious services, which often last for hours, can be emotionally charged, as participants give testimony of their faith, experience divine healing, and speak or sing in tongues.⁹

Stephen Glazier also refers to how Pentecostal leaders in Brazil were able to attract the ordinary people through identification with the common needs of the people; "...it becomes apparent that many aspects of Brazil's traditional society have taken root and thrived in the Pentecostal sects. In this sense, the rapid growth of Pentecostalism does not represent a break, symbolic or otherwise, with the traditional social order."¹⁰ These Spirit-filled believers identified with the historical/traditional community life, and therefore Pentecostalism prospered.

As can be seen, *OHT* has been influential throughout Pentecostalism from the earliest of times in many historical contexts. Walter Hollenweger points out that the Pentecostal tradition has had as many as five various roots. He has listed these with lengthy explanation, but it will suffice to only name them here: 'black oral root,' 'Catholic root,' 'evangelical root,' 'critical root,' and 'ecumenical root.'¹¹ The first applies directly to this study, since "the black root connects with not only the slave religious experience of the late nineteenth century but also the contemporary explosion of independent Pentecostal and charismatic type churches in western and sub-Saharan Africa."¹² In both cases, *OHT* had major impact on the spread of the gospel. The region

9. Julia G. Young, "Latino Pentecostals in America," *Commonweal Magazine*, February 5, 2015, accessed May 25, 2016, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/latino-pentecostals-america>.

10. Stephen D. Glazier, *Perspectives on Pentecostalism: Case Studies from the Caribbean and Latin America* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1980), 120.

11. Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 21.

12. Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out*, 21.

of the *IOU COGOP* is an exceptional testimony to this incorporation of various forms of *OHT* that was transplanted to our region over the last fifteen years with more than twenty different cultural backgrounds from Europe, Africa, Asia, Central and South America.

In defining of *OHT*, the observations of Juan Sepúlveda need addressing by the church. He has listed six particulars that identify what he has termed *Another Way of Doing Pentecostal*: 1] they have a distinctive indigenous character, 2] they have originated usually locally rather than externally, 3] their development has normally been autonomous, 4] they are shaped and influenced by local factors, 5] they practice a Pauline method of being self-supporting, and 6] they are congregations seeking for a more intense experience with God.¹³ These are fitting descriptions of how *OHT* developed in early twentieth century America and in many third world nations, but should not be assumed to encompass only the third world churches. Juan Sepúlveda has accurately described conditions and attitudes witnessed in the *IOU* churches and further embraced by most pastors.

The Complexity of Oral History/Theology within Pentecostalism

The nature of *OHT* is its attractiveness to familial life, as well as the ability to serve as the family when such normal structures are hindered or broken. Clearly, negative inferiority among the masses has left a stigma on people that made them feel like victims rather than victors. Pentecostalism did much to change the oral history-theology of these families.¹⁴ Vinson Synan recognized early on the influence that Pentecostalism placed

13. Calvin L. Smith, ed., *Pentecostal Power: Expressions, Impact and Faith of Latin American Pentecostalism* (Boston, MA: IDS Publishers, 2011), 37-39.

14. Smith, *Pentecostal Power*, 205.

upon institutions, governments, and societies. Families are not only impacted, but he saw that ‘all parts of the church’ as well as ‘young and old’ would be united in this ongoing work of the Spirit.¹⁵ Synan had earlier indicated in his writings that “Pentecostalism is a relational theology...At the heart of Spirit-empowerment orthodoxy and orthopraxy is the conviction that adherents may enter into an incomparable relationship with Jesus Christ.”¹⁶ The relationship being essential, *OHT* is usually a healthy family oriented mindset that either builds up existing families or becomes the family they never had the opportunity to enjoy. More will be written on this in a later section.

Another movement in the Philippines called the *Santuala*, also borrowed much from the indigenous traditions, but exhibited some of the same Pentecostal “practices of healing, dancing, trance experience, communicating with spirits and seeing visions.”¹⁷ As can be evidenced, the nature of the *OHT* is pervasive around the globe. Because there has been so little formal theological training and a lack of historical documentation regarding Pentecostalism in many areas (such as in schools and administrative offices), Wonsuk Ma notes that evangelistic activities and its attractiveness to the younger generations have made it no longer a “made in the USA.”¹⁸ Lastly, Wonsuk points out that in Asia the typical classical Pentecostalism postulated the coming of the Holy Spirit as empowerment for a witness, but with the growth in Charismatic theology “the tide has turned toward a more self-centered, blessing-oriented theological outlook that conflicts with classical Pentecostalism.”¹⁹ This kind of thinking has therefore dramatically

15. Vinson Synan, *Spirit-Empowered Christianity in the 21st Century*, (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2011), 491.

16. Synan, *Spirit-Empowered Christianity in the 21st Century*, 213.

17. Anderson and Tang, *Asian and Pentecostal*, 321.

18. Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies, *The Spirit and Spirituality: Essays in Honour of Russell P. Spittler* (New York, NY: T & T Clark International, 2004), 48-49.

19. Ma and Menzies, *The Spirit and Spirituality*, 67.

changed the nature of *OHT* and its development. Occasionally, it has caused confrontation among various branches of Pentecostalism. As Michael Bergunder writes,

Pentecostalism has been a global endeavor right from its beginning. No country or place can claim origin of Pentecostalism. Nevertheless, many Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America display quite a strong white North American evangelical flavor that has its source in the huge missionary activities undertaken by Pentecostals from the United States.²⁰

Therefore, the nature of Pentecostalism is hugely *OHT* even in the United States.

To demonstrate the power of the nature of the *OHT*, Anderson states,

But as in Africa, the evidence in China that Pentecostalism converged with and strongly influenced the phenomenon of independency is incontrovertible. Pentecostalism in its emphasis on the supernatural was in sync with Chinese folk religion; its offer of spiritual power to everyone regardless of status or achievements; its deep suspicion of hierarchal and rationalistic Christianity, encouraged the development of new, anti-western independent churches.²¹

It is further elaborated on by Glazier in the Brazilian Pentecostal social structures and in the Columbian indigenous movement where the "...symbolic initiation into Pentecostalism, speaking in tongues, often came prior to a total biblical understanding of the workings of the new dynamic in theology."²² In reality, while Parham, Seymour, or Cashwell embraced the fullness of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, I have found no evidence to support that they ever proclaimed to know the fulness of a theological understanding concerning this new Pentecostal experience.

In actuality, the nature and extent of this *OHT* is further postulated by Anderson where he notes,

Indeed, in many cultures of the world, where the religious specialist or 'person of God' has the power to heal the sick and ward off evil spirits and sorcery, the offer of healing by Pentecostalism has been one of its major attractions. In these

20. Anderson and Tang, *Asian and Pentecostal*, 166.

21. Allan Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 136.

22. Glazier, *Perspectives on Pentecostalism*, 85, 181.

cultures, a holistic worldview that does not separate the ‘physical’ from the ‘spiritual’ continues, and people see Pentecostalism as a ‘powerful’ religion to meet human needs.²³

This holistic approach draws support from an article where Anderson concurs emphatically with Hollenweger: “The expansion of Pentecostalism in Africa in the twentieth century can be attributed, at least partially, to cultural factors. Walter Hollenweger sees the ‘oral structures’ of Pentecostalism, like Christianity itself, to be the reason for its initial growth, and not in any ‘particular Pentecostal doctrine.’”²⁴

Ogbu Kalu observes in his studies three implications for African oral history-theology in church historiography: 1] the shift of Christianity’s center of gravity where the southern Hemisphere has turned it into a laboratory opening up with new forms of interpretation, 2] with the emergence of third world religion, there are elements of ethnicity and religion that were considered too primitive to survive that are not dying but now are on the center stage of social analysis, and 3] what Africans call ‘the finger of God’ in a conceptual way to explain how the Holy Spirit is working in Africa and other third world nations to re-evangelize through this new outpouring.²⁵ Ogbu is on solid ground with his substantial analysis because the global church is having to give ample credence, study, and discussion to the gospel beyond just the past western ideas of reformed or systematic theology over the last three centuries.

23. Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 211.

24. Allan Anderson, “The Pentecostal Gospel, Religion and Culture in African Perspective,” University of Birmingham, UK, 2000, accessed May 31, 2016, http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/aanderson/Publications/pentecostal_gospel.htm.

25. Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 68.

The Dangers of Theologies in Preaching

Again, some errors and unexpected blessings have crept in through *OHT* churches, such as the practice of dictatorial leadership and lawless fellowships,²⁶ the Toronto Blessing that spawned a myriad of abuses,²⁷ and even isolated instances in North America churches “where the marginalized and dispossessed could find equality regardless of race, gender or class.”²⁸ Without question, there have been many cases of abuse in classical Pentecostal churches, Charismatic churches, and even in the *COGOP IOU* region, but *OHT* has more than proved it had aided the spread of the gospel and the acceptance of Spirit Baptism enormously. Even so, it must be noted that the doctrines of ‘consequence’ and ‘subsequence,’ when it comes to the Spirit Baptism, have been a heated argument between Pentecostals and Evangelicals. However, Pentecostals who adopt the practices of Pentecost and Azusa Street have benefitted by *OHT*. To the classical Pentecostals, the doctrine of initial evidence of tongue speaking after conversion (as a second or third blessing) has been a foundation stone of their teachings and practice. Over the years, writings by Willis Hoover, F. F. Bosworth, and recently by Gordon Fee have challenged the belief in ‘initial evidence,’ yet those who adhere to *OHT* usually hold fast to ‘consequence’ ideology as a different and separate experience that follows salvation.²⁹ Within the *COGOP*, this ‘initial evidence’ doctrine as a part of their *OHT* has been embraced strongly in its preaching and teaching. This was so stalwartly emphasized

26. Frank Bartleman, *Azusa Street: An Eyewitness Account* (Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos, 1980), 182.

27. Geoff Waugh, “Pentecostalism’s Global Language, Interview with Walter Hollenweger,” *Renewal Journal Blog*, March 19, 2012, accessed May 24, 2016, <https://renewaljournal.blog/2012/03/19/pentecostalism-global-language-interview-with-walter-hollenweger/>.

28. Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 45.

29. Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 192-193.

that preachers and writers in the *COGOP* would, later on, echo this doctrine of ‘consequence’ as the real test for legitimacy of any claim by a group to be a Bible Church.³⁰

The benefits and risks of *OHT* are highlighted even in the Early Church, as acutely recognized by Stanley Porter when he speaks to ‘Conflict Resolution.’ In referencing the preaching dilemma to the Gentiles, he adds,

The Jerusalem Council is more than simply a demonstration of Christian leadership. This episode is unique in the New Testament account for providing a graphic depiction of how the early church came to terms with change, development, and conflict—but worked through these problems to an equitable solution that maintained the integrity of God’s purpose and call, while also appreciating diversity within a complex and dynamic context.³¹

This kind of event illustrates how important it is to maintain tradition when it promotes biblical principles, but also adequately demonstrates how preaching and teaching must always provide elocution of truth. The Early Church leadership was learning to grasp the new message of the ‘good news’ while retaining those aspects of *OHT* that preserved veracity. This principle is better understood by Porter’s earlier reference to ‘Theology and Significance of Leadership,’ where Hodge states,

Because being ‘in Christ’ is the most important of Paul’s identities, and because adaptability—imitating Christ—is central to what it means to be ‘in Christ,’ he is willing to rearrange other components of his Judean identity for the sake of this task. The fact that Paul shares ‘in-Christness’ with Gentiles does not imply that Paul gives up his Judeanness, becoming Gentile or Christian or anything else.³²

Paul is well aware of the element of danger in preaching if a minister does not carefully discern what or what not to retain.

30. Daniel D. Preston, *The Church Triumphant* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1969), 230.

31. Benjamin K. Forrest and Chet Roden, eds., *Biblical Leadership: Theology for the Everyday Leader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2017), 395.

32. Forrest and Roden, *Biblical Leadership*, 370.

This preoccupation with ‘being right’³³ that permeated the *COGOP* in the *IOU* region, is further accentuated by the observation of Gonzalez where he states,

...during the Middle Ages the preoccupation with *being right* (my italics) before God led to the development of a complex penitential system, to the point that people came to believe that salvation is something we attain by our own good works, and not something freely given out of God’s love. The Reformation of the sixteenth century was to a large extent an effort to undo this and other developments.³⁴

On the other hand, the twentieth century brought on another reformation, while the first reformation had been a revolution to give clarification to biblical theology and soteriology, the later reformation of Pentecostalism rekindled the first century pursuit and empowerment of holiness and pneumatology. Even though this reality is clearly indicated by history, it is Hollenweger who observes, “Remarkably Pentecostalism has not developed a pneumatology which fits its experience. One would expect Pentecostals and charismatics to be strong on pneumatology; this is not the case. They are strong on experience of the Spirit, on *pneumapraxis*, but they are weak on the interpretation of these experiences.”³⁵ Henceforth, this has left a chasm where *OHT* often relies more on experience and preaching, opening up the danger of ignoring the need to base her beliefs on thorough study of the biblical theology behind the phenomena. This can be summed up by Leighton Ford when describing the task of leadership: “...the challenge facing any leader is to help people see the realities that are, and to envision new realities that can be.”³⁶

33. Denver Race, “Considerations for the Future of the COGOP,” (Research Paper, History and Theology of the Church of God of Prophecy, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary HMP Consortium, Boise, ID, 2018), 4.

34. González, *A Concise History of Christian Doctrine*, 11.

35. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, 218.

36. Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership: Jesus’ Way of Creating Vision, Shaping Values & Empowering Change* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 227.

Leadership Empowered or Hindered by Oral History/Theology

In addition to the inherent dangers of *OHT*, its experiential and pluralistic nature appeals to all ages of leadership (especially the new generation). Anderson has pointed out that many new African churches appreciate the reconstructions and innovations that let them interact with people and to break from old parochial denominations. He further observed that younger leaders disdain formalism and often the mainline churches, yet they also reject traditionalism that hangs on to tribalism.³⁷ They basically want to make innovations that will assist them in reaching new generations; therefore, they also reject *OHT* or other systems if they are not pertinent to building the church and the kingdom of God. This has been the experience of younger ministers in the *IOU* region, who do not want to cling to the baggage of the *OHT* mindset. Harvey Cox in 1994 spoke about this same ‘Pentecostal revolution’ where the younger generation of Pentecostal pastors are rapidly moving toward an ‘experiential’ view instead of the ‘fundamentalist’ (biblical literalist) direction. He has written that among Latin American Pentecostal/Evangelicals they want the relational leadership reminiscent of *OHT* in the past, rather than the mainline ‘patriarchal-machoist’ church administration.³⁸ This is causing an increase in relations that favor pluralism within the leadership. *OHT* is favorable in part but not in the whole. To this new emerging leadership, they want to be more selective with inclusion of anything from the past.

Leadership style is not the only ministry being affected, so is the preaching or worship styles and content. Worship is being scrutinized by ‘up and coming’ leadership. Chris Bowater has stated, “Worship must emanate from a current, ongoing, intimate

37. Anderson, *Pentecostal Gospel*, 13.

38. Smith, *Pentecostal Power*, 102.

relationship with God... You see, the true worshippers are those who are living in the reality of their relationship with God... There is a real danger of worshipping worship—the new songs, the atmosphere. We must see the Lord, upon the throne, and concentrate on Him alone.”³⁹ In this area, contemporary Pentecostal/Charismatics are often criticized in abandoning many *OHT* traditions and customs.

In another contemporary development, ‘the issue of deliverance’ has provided an image that articulates a holistic view of salvation. There is certainly a synergistic holistic view of salvation through public acts of deliverance. “The concept of ‘deliverance’ from all forces of sin that bring death can serve as a soteriological model that brings together the official theology with the folk theology.”⁴⁰ This unification has benefited leaders who do not want to offend old chiefs but gain access for the gospel into their towns or regions. In Latin America, Glazier writes,

Pentecostalism has been shown to be not simply some aberrant activity, practiced fanatically or even surreptitiously, but a momentous movement whose implications for national development are first being explored... once they become committed converts, regardless of their initial reason for recruitment, then faith healing must be placed in the context of a compelling doctrine which promises to transcend other ideologies in reshaping one’s personal values.⁴¹

Where this kind of respect and careful use of *OHT* is utilized wisely, it has immensely empowered leaders to reach first-time converts and move them within discipleship relationships toward biblical theology.

39. William K. Kay & Anne E. Dyer, *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies* (St. Albans Place, London: SCM Press, 2004), 159.

40. Dale M. Coulter, “Delivered by the Power of God: Toward a Pentecostal Understanding of Salvation,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 10, no. 4 (October 2008): purchased document, 21.

41. Glazier, *Perspectives on Pentecostalism*, 2-3.

Another way that *OHT* has empowered leaders is found in Chilean Pentecostalism. For instance,

...in places where population groupings were small and the level of formal education low, such as in rural and semi-rural villages or small towns, the scarcity of people with some kind of organizational experience made it easier for members of Pentecostal churches, and even pastors, to reach positions of leadership in new social organizations. In turn, this made it easier for church members to join those organizations.⁴²

Later on, these groups united their former strong roots within communities and with the Pentecostal churches to restrain members from joining or becoming active in militant political parties.⁴³ *OHT* cannot be solely accredited with this actual transformation of these converts' attitudes, but it often was conjoined with practical influences to assure success.

This is further explored by Land in writing about *Fusion* and *Fission*:

Fusion refers to those polarities or pairs of concepts which are of equal importance and, in the apocalyptic fire of spirituality, are fused phenomenologically. Fission, on the other hand, refers to those elements or dynamics which are separate, of unequal value to the believer and are sometimes mutually exclusive. The former (fusion) expresses an integration while the latter (fission) expresses a segregation or important distinction.⁴⁴

This is seen in how a person can speak in tongues as evidence of a coming kingdom yet use rationally learned knowledge to teach new converts. This is not a contradiction, but use of two pairs of equal value to advance the kingdom of God. With *OHT* this is not generally a problem but a *fusion* of the Spirit and Word. Later on, Land will write about the power of the Holy Spirit to give authority and anointing to bishops and elders because they rely on the Holy Spirit as their teacher and guide. He challenges leaders with the

42. Smith, , *Pentecostal Power*, 56.

43. Smith, , *Pentecostal Power*, 56.

44. Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 98.

critical need to have ‘divine power’ and ‘experiential salvation’ so they can minister with the Spirit to open their hearts to build necessary relationships with believers and unbelievers.⁴⁵ It can be said that this is what made *OHT* so essential since the rise of Pentecostalism; leadership and those who inspired to be leaders were attracted to the power of the Spirit (*Pneuma*) more than the truth of Holiness. Both were important and required by the word of God, “for without holiness no man shall see God” (Hebrews 12:14). However, Pentecostals imitated the early apostles’ empowerment enthusiastically while retaining the importance of holiness in their discipleship of new believers.

If I were to draw on one quote that sums up the advantage of *OHT*, it would be a gem by Anderson who caught the essence of this new yet old truth:

Pentecostals in Africa proclaim a pragmatic gospel that seeks to address practical needs like sickness, poverty, unemployment, loneliness, evil spirits and sorcery. In varying degrees and in many and varied forms, and precisely because of their inherent flexibility, these Pentecostals attain an authentically indigenous character which enables them to offer answers to some of the fundamental questions asked in their own context. A thoughtful approach to local culture and the retention of certain cultural practices are undoubtedly major reasons for their attraction, especially for those millions overwhelmed by urbanization with its transition from a rural to an impersonal urban one.⁴⁶

No one can deny that there are some drawbacks to including everything from past cultures, religions or traditions, but *OHT* cannot be totally rejected or thrown out since its strength and value far outweigh any liabilities. In the *IOU* region, this selected integration of old and new is gaining ground as pastors learn to appreciate the past and the present attributes of Pentecostalism.

What happens though when *OHT* begins to infringe upon other values or into the unity of the Body of Christ? A great example of this is found in Africa:

45. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 157.

46. Anderson, *Pentecostal Gospel*, 14.

A prophet was a charismatic figure, stringently opposed to indigenous gods and yet critical of missionary methods as a replacement of one culture for another without confronting primary allegiances and covenants. It was as if Africans created a periphery where they dialogued with the missionary message while preserving a core interior or epicenter where traditional allegiances predominated.⁴⁷

The example here of facing *OHT* and its hindrances to legitimate charismatic ministry revealed how leaders were empowered by the Holy Spirit. In fact, they demonstrated a balance between these two influences that could effectively link these two polar dynamics into a synergized whole. In the *IOU* region of the *COGOP*, when faced with these same infringements we recognized that a balance had to be negotiated. Some new ideas were rejected as not supported by Scripture or not beneficial to reaching the surrounding culture. At the same time, other innovations were accepted because there was no biblical principle being violated and their inclusion was beneficial. This intentional action has led to several dynamic churches that respect the past values of *OHT* while merging into their leadership, worship, and preaching many of the new methodologies of the emerging cultures. The value of culture is emphasized by González when examining this new infusion. He writes,

Given their understanding of creation and its connection with redemption, Christians must affirm the action of God in every culture even before the gospel is heard in it. When the gospel comes to any culture, its followers must both recognize God's action in the culture itself and correct the shortcomings and injustices within their own culture, which they should now see more clearly in light of the gospel.⁴⁸

Relational Theology Springs and Proceeds from Oral History-Theology

To Timothy, a *beloved son*: Grace, mercy, and peace from God *the Father* and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, *as my forefathers* did, as without ceasing *I remember you* in my prayers night and day,

47. Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 36.

48. González, *A Concise History of Christian Doctrine*, 63.

greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in *your grandmother* Lois and *your mother* Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. Therefore I remind you to stir up *the gift of God which is in you* through the laying on of my hands. (2 Timothy 1:2-6, NKJV, italics added for emphasis).

These verses from the apostle to a young pastor illustrate the importance of relationships and beginnings. It is clear from this statement by Paul that relational theology has a strong link to *OHT*. In my case this is a similar story, for I too am a recipient of the benefits, as well as some of the negative influences of *OHT*. The background of any person's experiences and theology must be confessed and honestly examined if one is to discern between what is beneficial and what is not.

The words of Chan are so important to this subject:

Spiritual direction cannot occur apart from the Christian story. The goal of direction is to learn to live in congruence with the Christian story, and therefore it cannot simply be identified with personal integration. It is integration of a specific kind, namely, union with God. Spiritual maturity involves a person's relationship with God, while psychological integration does not...The work of a spiritual director goes beyond merely providing a professional service; in fact, it goes beyond what we are accustomed to calling work. It is sharing a way of life together.⁴⁹

This is where *OHT* comes into this story because in *OHT* the beginning and continuation of the story of the gospel of Christ is communicated by the Holy Spirit from one relationship to another. In Pentecostalism, this relational Spirit found root and became an unstoppable force moving around the globe.

R. G. Spurling at the turn of the twentieth century was led by the '*Director*' (the Holy Spirit) into this continuing story. Coulter writes, "Spurling asserted that Christ's commandment or law to love one another must ultimately define the church as the people

49. Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 228.

of God. Christians do not create this fellowship. Rather, it pre-exists in the Spirit and is first given because the Spirit inscribes the law of Christ on the heart. Any other basis of fellowship must be rejected.”⁵⁰ The reality of this contextualization and the work of the Holy Spirit is found in the Christian tradition of telling the gospel story about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Chan adds, “It is global not because it has the character of a *theologia perennis*,⁵¹ which is appropriate in all places and at all times, but because it recognizes that the world is complex—made up of differing contexts that shape our behavior and thought in subtle and often unrecognized ways. Within this complexity the gospel can find its own authentic expression.”⁵²

In light of these above concepts about the Holy Spirit and relationships, there is no doubt that in *OHT* that Pentecostals allowed Spirit Baptism to conduct their work different than in ‘evangelical churches.’ Anderson cites William Saayman who observed,

most Pentecostal movements ‘came into being as missionary institutions’ and their mission work was not the result of some clearly thought out theological decision, and so policy and methods were formed mostly in the crucible of missionary praxis. It must be acknowledged that despite the seeming naiveté of many early Pentecostals, their evangelistic methods were flexible, pragmatic and astonishingly successful.⁵³

With the emerging Pentecostalism around the earth, the presence of the Holy Spirit identifies not only a historical Jesus, but the church as a vital part of that identity. Coulter writes, “The church is the body of Christ precisely because it *embodies* this vocation ‘in

50. Dale M. Coulter, “The Development of Ecclesiology in the Church of God (Cleveland, TN): A Forgotten Contribution,” *Pneuma* 29, no. 1 (January 2007), accessed February 1, 2016, https://brill.com/abstract/journals/pneu/29/1/article-p59_4.xml?rskey=yYgqNW&result=1.

51. The term *theologia perennis* is defined as “shaping a new theology” as referenced by Leone Ebreo, University of Liège: Rencontres Doctorates Internationals, Methods and Case Studies, January 2018, 30-31. <https://medievalartresearch.com/2018/01/15/conference-transitions-concept-methodes-et-etudes-de-cas-liege-30-31-jan-18/>.

52. Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 25.

53. Anderson, *Pentecostal Gospel*, 2.

the Spirit’ corresponding to the way that Jesus realized his vocation ‘in the Spirit’...the church’s identity will reveal itself in the particular way that the vocational identity of one person becomes the vocational identity of many persons.”⁵⁴ Therefore, the *OHT* of Pentecostalism is helping facilitate the identity of Christ by revealing the essentialness of all the people of God, the body of Christ, in communicating this calling to others. This is the attractiveness of Pentecostalism *OHT* in the early twentieth century and even now in the early twenty-first century. Within the confines of the *IOU* region of the COGOP, this relational aspect of feeling like they were all a *family* is one factor cited by both the past generations and the present generation. It is this uncontested factor in the *COGOP* and especially in the *IOU* region that has caused exponential growth in our churches and also in the planting of new churches.⁵⁵

The Relationship of Preaching and Oral History/Theology

In a remarkable book published in the 1980’s, writer Hostetler makes a vivid statement that joins preaching with the belief in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He writes, “We need to be reminded constantly and forcefully of the greatness of Christ and the gospel. This gospel, proclaimed by Jesus Christ, attested by God with miracles and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, received by the apostles, and experienced by the church is the most important issue in life”⁵⁶ Pentecostalism from its inception connected preaching to the manifestation of healings, miracles and demonic expulsions. *OHT* carried this

54. Dale M. Coulter, “Christ, The Spirit, and Vocation: Initial Reflections on a Pentecostal Ecclesiology,” *Pro Ecclesia* 19, no. 3 (2010): 329.

55. Adrian L. Varlack, COGOP Historian, interview by Wallace Pratt, April 6, 2018, Boise, ID, transcribed by Nolan Daniels and approved in writing by Adrian L. Varlack.

56. Michael J. Hostetler, *Introducing the Sermon: The Art of Compelling Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1986), 53.

tradition and praxis into the formulation of its preaching ministry. In the history of the *COGOP*, these same ingredients were expected. Speaking to ministers about their preaching and their church services, A. J. Tomlinson preached in the 1925 Assembly:

Manifestations and demonstrations are signs of life, but the absence of manifestations and demonstrations are signs of death to me. I do not mean to say that a person is dead spiritually if he has no manifestations of the Spirit, neither do I mean to say that everyone should shout or dance or demonstrate in some manner in every service, neither do I mean to say that when there are no manifestations in a service that all have backslidden, but I am only trying to encourage our people to get close to God and be so full of the spirit until the demonstrations like at Pentecost can be repeated more frequently, and to teach our people to have their faith in the power of God more than in something that merely feeds the intellect.⁵⁷

This admonition demonstrates the strong *OHT* tradition in the *COGOP* that embraced fully the phenomenon of Pentecostalism that many holiness churches at that time adhered to. It was well-justified in light of these manifestations harmonizing with the Holy Spirit's work in the Acts of the Apostles.

The above reference coincides with the global Neo-Pentecostalism that now prevails in many Pentecostal churches. This theology or precisely eschatological thinking is emphasized by Amos Young who resonates a similar message when recounting the work of the Holy Spirit in the global context. He writes,

Thus a pneumatological theology of the liturgy recognizes the necessity of the Spirit quickening the word of Christ in order to give life to the people of God. When this happens, the letter of the law becomes living and active (John 6:63; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 4:12). This is what Pentecostals often call the '*rhēma* word,' which speaks God's word anew and afresh to the here-and-now situation of the believer and the believing community. This indeed occurs in the contemporary sermon, the central form of kerygmatic proclamation of the living word of Christ by the power of the Spirit.⁵⁸

57. Lillie Duggar, *A. J. Tomlinson: Former General Overseer of the Church of God* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1964), 261-262.

58. Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out*, 161.

Pentecostals until recent years were preoccupied in their preaching with the inward man. The *COGOP*, including the *IOU*, concentrated much of their pulpit ministry for decades toward personal holiness and church discipline. Strangely very little was done to encourage or instruct ministers on the importance of social justice and secular structures. In 1932, even prophetic utterances were confined only to preaching, and genuine prophecy was dissuaded.⁵⁹ This reflected on the early *OHT* influence on this movement. As late as 1981, Raymond Pruitt wrote,

A prophet is someone who speaks on behalf of God. The Old Testament prophet not only foretold, he also told forth God's message. When one speaks or preaches under the anointing of the Spirit, he may be said to be prophesying (see 1 Corinthians 14:29). Our ministers no doubt exercise the gift of prophecy when in the midst of their preaching they receive a special unction to speak forth God's message under the divine inspiration of the Spirit.⁶⁰

Hence, there was no witness to the evil forces in the surrounding community that deprived and hurt the people (including believers). This situation was alluded to by Villafañe in his volume concerning the Pentecostal social ethic:

The Spirit's 'charismatic' empowerment has been a singular and distinguishing emphasis in Pentecostalism. Hispanic Pentecostals, as other Pentecostals, have tended to interpret this experience narrowly. While it is true that Pentecostalism has been recognized as a powerful force in evangelism, world missions, church growth and spirituality, it is equally true that their services and prophetic voices against sinful social structures and on behalf of social justice have been missing.⁶¹

There is also another element of *OHT* frequently heard in the pulpits of the *IOU* region of the *COGOP* that must be observed and fleshed out, so we can appreciate the retention of that which is genuine and effective. This is the art or persuasion of

59. Church of God, Minutes: 27th Annual Assembly of the Church of God: (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1932), 53.

60. Raymond M. Pruitt, *Fundamentals of the Faith* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing, 1981), 314.

61. Eldin Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit: Toward an Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), 202.

storytelling. Over the years growing up in Pentecostalism and even in the *IOU*, I have often heard stories told when ministers were preaching. As noted, some of these were powerful and moving to the congregations, some were simply redundant and reflected on the unlearned capacity of many of our past generations of ministers. But in other situations, these elocutions were persuasive and used by the Spirit.

Calvin Miller has come to value these forms of preaching that were very commonly passed on through *OHT* and still hold importance. He writes,

This book will hearken back to basic biblical form. Story is not just a biblical literary mode, but an authentic communication used first by God in inspiring Scripture and thus making it commendable for all those who later wish to communicate the ‘Big Story’ in effective ways. Storytelling is not only the best form of getting and keeping attention, it is also a great teacher. Storytelling is a great teacher for two reasons. First, it keeps the audience listening, so they can learn. Second, it is easier to remember once the sermon is over.⁶²

This is an insightful quotation, and it contributes greatly to our understanding of the durable relationship between preaching and the positive characteristics of *OHT*.

While the honest observer sees the constructive worth of storytelling, one can also witness one of the prevailing hold-overs from *OHT* tradition. Topical preaching has for almost a century held sway over the homiletics of Pentecostals. Throughout global Pentecostalism, this habit has been deep-rooted and often is utilized for preaching purposes to support many sermons.

It was the notation found in *Grasping God’s Word* that quickened my memory to many a preacher I have heard over the years growing up in the *COGOP*. In that book, the authors caution, “Topical preaching is a valid approach to preaching when the various passages are understood in context and the overall message doesn’t violate those

62. Calvin Miller, *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 147-148.

individual contexts. But far too often topical preaching distorts the meaning of Scripture by disregarding the literary context.”⁶³ Certainly, this hits the target when it comes to the importance of preaching as it relates to the *OHT* dynamic.

The integrity of preaching must be retained in every form of Christianity. For this to happen, we must elevate the status of sound biblical exegesis. The sage of expository preaching, Robinson gives what many consider to be the best definition of this kind of reliable preaching: “Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of the passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers.”⁶⁴ To fulfill this excellent definition and goal of preaching, *OHT* must not be allowed to go unchecked when it impinges upon good hermeneutical practices. In the *COGOP*, especially within the region of the *IOU*, this has been a persistent challenge over the last fifteen years to transition pastors away from a constant reliance on topical sermons that have often neglected expository preaching that utilizes proper exegetical study.

I have come to the end of this chapter with a greater appreciation for *OHT* and with realization that a person cannot accept everything passed on until it has been carefully examined. One can never grasp fully a subject of this magnitude that cuts across centuries, denominations and generations, but one can realize that Christians who have encountered Jesus Christ and have been empowered for a lifetime by Spirit Baptism can move away from negative influences while reaping the strengths of *OHT*. No one can

63. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2005), 125.

64. Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 21.

underestimate the value of a person's heart when he or she is willing to allow the Holy Spirit to guide them through the confusing maze of cultural traditions, familial influences, educational institutions, and ecclesiastical organizations.

In a splendid presentation on *The Justified Community*, Frank Macchia has summed it up best:

For example, I live in myriad relationships that mediate my life for me. I am a husband, a father, a friend, a teacher, and so forth. But I engage in all of these relationships from a self-conscious center that I sometimes rediscover and nourish in solitude. Without this sense of self apart from others, I am wholly dependent on the acceptance of others to have a sense of identity. Such dependence can easily turn into an oppressive reality in which the significant others of my life can control me by threatening to withdraw their acceptance if I do not conform to their wishes. An oppressive manipulation of individuals can also be imposed by the state or powerful social or cultural influences.⁶⁵

With this recognition of the dynamic ability of the individual to make judgments and choices outside their past realms of influence, *OHT* does not seem to be a hindrance but simply a positive influence if discerned by the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures that Pentecostals embrace: “But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14, NKJV).

65. Frank D. Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit: Creation, Redemption, and the Triune God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), 269.

CHAPTER THREE

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Within this unit there will be a thorough examination of the oral history/theology for its inclusion of doctrines and policies that filtered into the framework of the *COGOP*. Occasionally, misguided biblical interpretation and poor theology led to an institutional paralysis that leaned heavily on oral traditions that often-spurned higher education. This reality functioned in similar fashion throughout the region of the *IOU*. When I arrived in this region in August 2004, there was only one pastor who held a bachelor's degree, and none had completed a Master of Arts degree. Researching past and present policies on biblical theology within the *COGOP* indicates that a typical response for the church was reliance on what was proclaimed to be right because of the reputation or position of someone 'over us in the Lord.' The official historian for the *COGOP* states,

So, when you heard things like that preached, it became so that yes, there was that infallible nature. And it is kind of a self-reinforcing, kind of cyclical approach to preaching. Of course, in the context of our church (since we were trying to get other people into the church to get them perfected), we did not have to defend it outside our walls. We only talked to people about it, basically after they got in. You see what I mean? So, we did not have to go out and say, 'Challenge this and you will find biblically that this is sound.' We didn't have to do that because it was kind of a self-contained approach to the fact that our own internal, oral preaching and practice and interpretation of the scriptures were infallible.¹

Such perceptions of divine, infallible leadership restrained any further illumination from Scripture and frequently relied on past preaching by early founders and pioneers rather than sound exegetical study.

In an article concerning the *COGOP*, Pastor Denver Race states,

1. Adrian L. Varlack, *COGOP* Historian, interview by Wallace Pratt, April 6, 2018, Boise, ID, transcribed by Nolan Daniels and approved in writing by Adrian L. Varlack.

The utilization of proper hermeneutics over excessive ‘type and shadow’ pulpit declarations require developing an attitude of being righteous over being proven ‘right.’ Avoidance of legalism, preaching biblical holiness and holding to biblical standards presses the need of spiritual discernment, education, and exercise of prayer. To turn-around the past dependence in the *IOU* region on traditional ways of interpreting Scripture, demanded caution to avoid ideas not borne of proper exegesis that played heavily in previous *COGOP* strategy. Just because it's a good idea doesn't make it a ‘God-idea’ and just because it's contrary to the world, doesn't make it aligned to the Spirit. Every attempt must be made to emulate biblical examples over human institutions or secular models.²

Several biblical injunctions must be addressed as my proposition will synchronize comparisons to these references. Herein I will examine numerous passages of Scripture that highlight the need to carefully discern the way we view the biblical text, and the doctrine passed on to us from *OHT*. From the beginning of the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, Peter is emboldened by the *Pneuma* with a new homiletical aid he had never experienced before. His first sermon preached indicates this new beginning:

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. (Acts 2:14-18 NIV)

This empowered oral speech by Peter, while emotionally moving and truly effective, did not exist outside his correct exegesis of the prophet Joel's words recorded and viewed assuredly as canonical by the Jewish priests, teachers of the Law, and his general audience. Moses, in Deuteronomy 5:2-3, indicates the critical nature of knowing not only the Bible but the contemporary audience who receives the preaching of the

2. Denver Race, “Considerations for the Future of the COGOP” (Research Paper, History and Theology of the Church of God of Prophecy, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary HMP Consortium, Boise, ID, 2018), 5.

sermon.³ This challenge that faced Israel in the wilderness is conjoined to our own journey to understand the relationship between God's Word and the present-day setting in which it is preached.

There is no question that preaching must engage people in their culture, language, and daily living. For example,

Barth saw only one use for theology – *as the servant of preaching*. All theology is tested by its practice. However, when doing its work for the proclamation of the church, Barth said that theology 'must keep in view that God is in heaven, but itself upon earth, that as compared with any human language and so even with that of the best dogmatic God, His revelation, and faith continue to live their own free life.' I wonder if our trouble is that evangelical theology believes in resurrection, but we have not yet comprehended the homiletical significance of ascension. Theology which doesn't know where God is, which can muster no more than the intellectual cowardice of benign agnosticism...never can be free to say much of interest to preaching.⁴

He has a very good point there; theology and preaching must be grounded to the reality of the world we live in. We see this evidenced in Paul's preaching to the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17:22-32). He wisely utilizes this unique ability to ascertain an audience's cultural and historical mindset, yet also discloses his conviction that the truth of the resurrection of Jesus (vs. 31-32) must still be introduced after careful homiletical construction of his sermon. Undoubtedly there are many instances within the *COGOP* in the *IOU* region where the cultural/historical mindset prevailed over the essential inclusion of reliable and legitimate exegetical practices.

The differences in preaching among Evangelicals and Pentecostals is clearly seen, not only in their churches but in the public places of proclamation. Denial of this chasm

3. Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 75.

4. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1969), 68.

is imprudent, yet the present gulf is simultaneously narrowing around the globe. The challenge is to retain sound biblical hermeneutics as preachers enlarge the inclusion of the Holy Spirit in their declarations. Richard Shaull catches the essence of this new encounter. He writes,

After listening to much Pentecostal preaching, I've come to the conclusion that, while their preachers, especially those most influenced by North American fundamentalism and evangelicalism, often use the same language, their message has a different focus: It centers on the life, death and resurrection of Christ, *leading to and culminating in the manifestation of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost*. This is the central reality of faith, and consequently, everything is interpreted and experienced from *this* center. This shift in understanding and living the gospel is not the result primarily of systematic theological reflection. It is rather something that is emerging from the moving of God's Spirit in the midst of suffering people on the periphery of society, whose situation is quite different from that of most of us.⁵

Denial of the value of the Holy Spirit in preaching cannot be justified in light of the dramatic global changes from Pentecostalism.

The Danger of Incorporating *Strange Fire*

In Leviticus 10:1, the Pentateuch contains one of its most unusual and devastating entries. Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered *strange fire* on the altar and were immediately slain by a fire sent out by the Lord. While David M. Maas points out that while we may not know the exact meaning of the *strange fire*, it is clear they went about their priestly duties without the proper care required of them before the altar of the Lord (Leviticus 6:8-13).⁶ With this in mind, preaching requires the same care as the priestly duties of the tabernacle. While incorporating the language, culture and setting are

5. Richard Shaull, "What Can the Mainline Learn from Pentecostals about Pentecost Preaching?" *Journal for Preachers* 21, no. 4 (1998): 8-9.

6. Benjamin K. Forrest and Chet Roden, eds., *Biblical Leadership: Theology for the Everyday Leader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2017), 62.

essential to the spread and healthy development of a church, it must be merged in an accurate manner since *OHT* is not inherently corruptive or detrimental to biblical theology. On the other hand, one needs to rely on a theological message that has strong exegetical support in Scripture. There is a responsibility indicated by Paul in Galatians 1:8-9 (NKJV): “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”

The minister must guard his/her preaching in whatever is passed on to make certain it retains the apostolic truth.⁷ In addition, we have to be careful in *OHT* about drifting away from the foundation of Jesus Christ which results in postulating sermons that are popular but not exegeted correctly.⁸ Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 3:10-11 (NIV) we read, “By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ”

Another scriptural insight comes from Job 38:2 (NIV), where the Lord cautions the patriarch, “Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?” This axiom is enlarged upon by a perceptive note concerning preaching from House and Garland who deftly warn about “relying on their personal, human, finite expertise, knowledge and wisdom.”⁹ They add the caution of “accounting to the Author of

7. Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 76.

8. Miller, *Preaching*, 129.

9. H. Wayne House and Daniel G. Garland, *God's Message, Your Sermon: Discover, Develop, and Deliver What God Meant by What He Said* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 124.

Scripture” more than that which He has said or implied.¹⁰ The *COGOP* history/theology reveals this frailty passed on through generations by oral pronouncements implying that certain scriptures proclaimed more than God intended.

Examining *OHT* and the Interpretive Journey

At this juncture, a careful analysis of key biblical passages that were interpreted and preached throughout the *COGOP* meetings and publications will be examined.

Before any references to these scriptures, it should be pointed out that the King James Version (1611) was used to determine all doctrinal positions and proclamations by the *COGOP* leaders and official Assemblies.¹¹ The Assembly ruling clearly stated,

“Inasmuch as many Bible Translations give conflicting views with regard to the doctrine *as taught by the Church* (italics added by me for emphasis), we recommend that this Assembly give voice of approval of the English King James Version of the Bible as being the authority for our Church doctrine and teaching.”¹² Although there were several later revisions of the KJV in 1629, 1638, 1762, 1769 and a few other minor ones,¹³ there was no recognition to these word changes and their dates by our church authorities.

We certainly were not using the original version but later revisions. Examination of key scriptures demonstrates this poor hermeneutic in the *COGOP* that relied heavily on early *OHT* traditions and misinterpretation of the Word of God by influential leaders and

10. House & Garland, *God's Message*, 124.

11. [There is a frequent use of the King James Version in this project because of *COGOP* reliance upon it; therefore, I have often retained the use of the KJV to demonstrate the *COGOP* interpretation that was based solely upon it until 2010. The KJV is used hereafter whenever another version is not cited.]

12. A. T. Wagner, *Church Business Guide*, 7th ed. (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1982), 1631.

13. David F. Reagan, “Has the King James Bible been Revised?” European-American Evangelistic Crusades, Retrieved August 16, 2018, http://eaec.org/bibleversions/kjv_been_revised.htm.

pulpiteers. This same trust in the *OHT* traditions was retained and strengthened by bishops and pastors in the *IOU*, a tendency that Pastor Denver Race attempted to rectify with his state bishop when he said, "...we must remember the message is still sacred, but the methodology must adapt."¹⁴

At this point, some key scriptures need to be introduced and analyzed. First, the passage of Isaiah 60:1-5 was commonly used in preaching and teaching in the *COGOP*, but most especially in the *IOU* region. This passage states,

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

There was no mistaking that the interpretation of the above passage was made steadfast by its constant and repeated application to the *COGOP* rather than to Jesus Christ. Another huge assumption was continuously preached regarding *unanimous agreement* that postulated a need to agree with the highest anointed leaders. For example, in the 56th Assembly, a straightforward answer was delivered by the General Overseer, A. J. Tomlinson, toward those who inquired about rulings made at the Assembly and their subsequent lack of enthusiasm when disagreeing with *unanimous* decisions.¹⁵ This same practice was exhibited in every convention, conference or local church in the *IOU*. This

14. Race, "Considerations for the Future," 4.

15. M. A. Tomlinson, *These Necessary Things*, 10th ed. (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing, 1983), 6.

tradition remained intact until the “One Accord” Principle replaced the *unanimous* ambiguity and the forced coercion subtly used in *OHT* prior to its passage.¹⁶

This tradition and the historical habit of eisegesis included the extremely inflammable definition of fornication that was preached fervently from Matthew 19:3-9. The accepted enforcement of this passage was a misinterpretation by the first General Overseer who stated,

Individuals of the party that holds for remarriage, when separation has been caused by fornication, have stated that they would submit if the word ‘except’ was not in the Scriptures (Matthew 19:9), but ‘except’ is there, and we do not dare cut it out. Now for the sake of an agreement and to start in search of a middle ground platform, suppose we leave the word ‘except’ right where it is and let it mean just what the remarriage party takes it to mean, but let us take the word ‘fornication’ and move it over a little and get a different meaning of it from what is usually accepted. Let it be fornication for a man to marry a woman who has a living husband instead of the act of adultery.¹⁷

The entire recording of this address on the issue of Divorce and Remarriage in 1923 was called a ‘compromise’ and in reality, it was the persuasion by the General Overseer that supported his own convictions and was challenged many times until finally overturned by an exhaustive exegetical study culminating in its subsequent change in the International Assembly of 2006.¹⁸ This traditional *OHT* belief system fully carried the weight of Tomlinson’s personal understanding rather than any exhaustive exegetical study by the *COGOP*.

In addition, there was a legalistic belief about “wearing gold for ornament” that was based on a misunderstanding of 1 Peter 3:1-7. In this passage of scripture, the

16. Virginia E. Chatham, ed., *Minutes: 93rd International General Assembly* (Cleveland, TN: 2004), 106-108.

17. A. J. Tomlinson, *General Assembly Annual Addresses 1911-1927*, vol 2, Heritage Series (1970, repr, Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing, 2011), 178.

18. Virginia E. Chatham, ed., *Minutes: 94th International General Assembly* (Cleveland, TN: 2006), 174-175.

wearing of wedding rings and other kinds of jewelry were all condemned as ‘the pride of life,’ and members of the *COGOP* could have their membership removed for any violation of this teaching against wearing ‘gold for ornament.’ Eventually, a correct exegetical interpretation of these verses led to a large exodus of members, pastors and churches (1994), because the *OHT* mindset had claimed more adherents than biblical hermeneutics.¹⁹ These scriptures and their interpretations were vouchsafed earlier by the official *COGOP* education department that taught “...the principle that the individual anointing—if it really comes from God—will not contradict the actions of the General Assembly.”²⁰ As a young minister, I remember emphatically being warned by my bishop that what was passed down through the *COGOP* Assembly was unquestionable.

These above-cited scriptures were so securely reiterated and propagated that voices of reason and responsible hermeneutics were silenced by creating an environment where *OHT* was elevated to unquestionable sacred dogma. Another scripture used to insist on uniformity of belief and practice was 1 Corinthians 1:10 (NKJV): “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

The phrase “perfectly joined together” could only be possible if all adherents of the faith agreed on the scriptures as interpreted by the General Overseer and subsequently adopted by the General Assembly. This was substantiated by sermons that were reprinted to rehearse them to the entire church membership. Using the above scripture in a message

19. Church of God of Prophecy, *Minutes:88th Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy* (Cleveland, TN: 1994), 59-65.

20. Church of God of Prophecy, *Lessons in Bible Training*, vol 1 (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House and Press, 1968), 14.

based on 1 Corinthians 1:10, Tomlinson surmised, “Any system or organization which promotes or allows differences in doctrine or variation in the teaching of the New Testament truths cannot justly lay claim to the unity of the Bible.”²¹

Conflicts within the Context Then and Now

Hitherto, there has been several scriptures injected into this study that were seriously misinterpreted through *OHT* traditions and were strongly emphasized, reiterated, and endorsed by *COGOP* leadership in General Assemblies and especially at conventions in the *IOU*. A pastor (age sixty) summed up this scenario when he wrote,

Leadership shifts and characteristics at the General Overseer level contributed greatly to the church's vision, remaining steady for eighty-seven years with Ambrose and his son Milton Tomlinson. From charismatic and holiness roots with A.J. Tomlinson's dynamic *in the field* experience, the church did slowly migrate to an internal focus on administrative prowess under M.A. Tomlinson. While soft-spoken and humble, he kept a strong sense of 'hold to the old ways' with a tendency that leaned toward legalism and exclusivity. In Idaho and Oregon, where my roots have been for over forty years, we heard this constantly supported in sermons by quoting passages like Proverbs 23:10, '*Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless.*' Over and over, this verse was interpreted as the *landmark* (being our traditional teachings) and the *fathers* (being our early leaders like A. J. Tomlinson). Nearly 50 years after the Tomlinson's, the Church of God of Prophecy would require a revolutionary break and a corporate call to repentance that resulted in leadership and doctrinal changes.²²

Shared experiences like the one described above bring me to the conflict over the context of Scriptures. Frequently in the preaching of the *COGOP* in the *IOU*, the pattern for many sermons or lessons followed the weaknesses in contextual integrity that often were perpetuated by *OHT*. While reading a volume on biblical interpretation, I came

21. M. A. Tomlinson, *The Glorious Church of God* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1968), 107.

22. Race, “Considerations for the Future,” 7.

across an illustration by Duvall and Hayes that made me more cognizant of this danger. They wrote about an old movie called *The Wizard of Oz* and how it was changed from the original story in a book entitled *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum.²³ In the cinematography version, the story was simply a delightful adventure of a young girl named Dorothy and her cute dog named Toto, who were able to overcome all the bad ladies or guys, evil creatures and a tornado. To the children who watched the movie for generations, it was a colorful story with a simple meaning. In reality, the story was actually a masterful political satire written to illustrate the hot political debate of Baum's day and time about the conflict over the desire of many politicians, businessmen, and bankers to move away from the gold standard to a silver monetary system.²⁴ Because the historical setting of this story was sacrificed to make an entertaining children's story, many years later as movies were invading the land of children's entertainment, its original meaning could be justifiably sacrificed. Now, this effective reversal of its original context and meaning (including replacing silver shoes with ruby slippers) is simply good cinematography. However, in the more serious realm of hermeneutics, the question remains: What happens when the original context or meaning of a scriptural verse or passage is sacrificed to establish and defend a doctrine or polity that does not reflect the biblical author's intended meaning at all?

The above illustration brings us to a scriptural passage found in Mark 11:1-10 that reads,

And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye

23. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2005), 175-176.

24. Duvall and Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, 175-176.

shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. And if any man say unto you, why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither. And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

The KJV Bible has been used above because this was the version that *COGOP* had accepted and from which they substantiated their interpretations. This particular passage was cited in A. J. Tomlinson's official Annual Address to the 32nd Annual Assembly (1937) to scripturally justify, propagate and encourage marches and parades in the Assemblies.²⁵ Incredible as it was, he misapplied this scripture to sustain his many requests for parades.

At this point, we need to make note of other remarks he made at the time.

Tomlinson used this scriptural passage to imply that the *COGOP* would be following the example of Jesus in having these parades or marches to whip up zeal and support for the Assemblies. Furthermore, he preached,

This is a wonderful description of a wonderful parade. By staging this parade Jesus leaves us an example and we feel we must have parades in His honor. The description shows that both his followers and others were in the parade. The description also shows that He endorsed our noise and shouting and praising God. Let us roar out praises to God this minute. By having this mighty throng in His parade, brought the acknowledgement that the world had gone after Him. By having our parades advertises the Church and it will lead to the same statement. Behold the world has gone after them. And this agrees with the prophecy which reads:

25. A. J. Tomlinson, *General Assembly Annual Addresses, 1928-1943*, vol. 3, Heritage Series (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing, 2011), 262-264.

Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee' (Isaiah 60:4-5).²⁶

This departure from the original context and spiritual meaning of the passage is further developed by a statement he had made prior to this exposition. Addressing the subject of "The Parades and Marches," he offers disapproval of those who decided not to bring banners to march with and chose to carry their Bibles while lifting them up before the Lord. He declares: "Of course, we do not discount the Bible, but God blesses people who obey the contents of the Bible instead of trying to make a banner of the Book that tells us to display the banners because of the truth. And isn't it true that we have to have marches and parades in order to make a display of banners and flags?"²⁷

From this same discourse, Tomlinson equates a greater move of the Holy Spirit with those carrying banners than with those who do not.²⁸ Genuine enthusiasm or increased zeal is just not referenced as the cause. He was not alone in this *OHT* habit of reading into the context of Scripture that which was not there. *IOU* Pastor Francisco Avila, writing from the Latino culture, observed this same contextual problem when interpreting 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 in our *IOU* region: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."

Pastor Avila observes,

26. Tomlinson, *General Assembly Annual Addresses, 1928-1943*, 264.

27. Tomlinson, *General Assembly Annual Addresses, 1928-1943*, 262.

28. Tomlinson, *General Assembly Annual Addresses, 1928-1943*, 262.

The lack of proper interpretation of scripture in the northwest and particularly in Idaho has had a great impact on how women have been able to identify themselves in their homes, churches and in society. This also affected how they were viewed within the context of Scripture. It seems like until the Assembly of 1996, we had gone backward instead of forwards when it came to women and their role in the church. Women were more than just people who bare children and maintained the home as good housekeepers. They are as great an instrument as men are and they are going to be used by God in this day and age like never before. But the challenge is to seek the scriptures and correctly interpret it in all the right context, and God forgive us for looking upon women as less than they are in the church and ministry. When the church went through a time of strict separation from the world and its influence on us, women endured much legalism, oppression and hardship as holiness was a prevalent message among Pentecostals. This brought on some issues that were primarily focused on the sisters.²⁹

There is a harmful cost to interpreting and applying scriptures outside of the biblical author's intended meaning. Ignoring the biblical context carries with it a significant risk to the preacher. Conflicts with the context of scriptural passages, both in the latter portion of the first century and even now are well documented. Simon Peter acknowledges this conflict when speaking of some of the apostle Paul's writings: "...There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:16, ESV).

This entire subject of preaching in the *COGOP* and particularly in the *IOU* gives evidence of either neglect of understanding concerning the original context of Scripture or sometimes a sad intentional 'plucking out' of scripture from its original meaning or setting. This issue of communication cannot be over-emphasized as one examines *OHT*. Duvall and Hays point out this problematic challenge:

29. Francisco Avila, "History and Doctrine of the COGOP: Women in Church History" (Research Paper, History and Theology of the Church of God of Prophecy, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary HMP Consortium, Boise, ID: 2018), 2.

The issue of communication, therefore, lies at the heart of one's decision about how to interpret a text. If you, the reader, see the text as a communication between the author and yourself, then you should search for the meaning the *author intended*. If, however, you as the reader do not care to communicate with the author, then you are free to follow *reader response* and interpret the text without asking what the author meant. In some cases, however, there may be negative consequences for such reading.³⁰

This inherent danger of miscommunication creates a systemic conflict as participants become more informed and better equipped in biblical hermeneutics. In the *COGOP*, the overuse of *OHT* was a deadly landmine.

The Word and the Role of the Holy Spirit

It would be impossible to delve into the Biblical and Theological Foundations of *OHT* and its formation in the Preaching Ministry in the *IOU COGOP*, without taking into consideration the relationship between the Word of God and the Role of the Holy Spirit. There is no question that the Holy Spirit in the *COGOP* in general and specifically in the *IOU* has had a paramount role in our preaching. This spiritual dependency and demonstration have been part of our DNA, especially since the 3rd Assembly of 1908.³¹ Authored and written sometime in the 1930's, A. J. Tomlinson did have an expressed desire to see the Holy Spirit Power and the Word of God held in juxtaposition or harmony in *COGOP*'s preaching, activities and services.

One very special sermon begins with this peculiar admonition and encouragement:

Every move we make that is in harmony with the Bible is rewarded by outpourings of God's Spirit and power. And we do not consider any move unless it is in harmony with the Bible. We have made several moves that we considered

30. Duvall and Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, 178.

31. Lillie Dugger, *A. J. Tomlinson: Former General Overseer of the Church of God* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1964), 55, 59.

forward moves, and thought we were being led by the unerring Spirit of God, but not until afterward did we learn that they were found to be backed by the Scripture. We are always safe when we have the Holy Spirit and the Holy Scriptures to guide us, and God to set His approval upon us in the way we are going, by sending upon us more demonstrations of His power.³²

Note how that the Spirit's leading led them to adopt decisions long before there followed any confirmation from the Scriptures. One would generally expect the opposite scenario.

This brings us to the supremacy of the Word while not neglecting spiritual revelation or illumination. The *COGOP* has thankfully long appreciated the need for divine revelation and the anointing of the Holy Spirit in its preaching, decision-making and gatherings. Even so, all spiritual movement and activities must have primary focus on the Word of God that is not negotiable. Simon Chan rightfully observes, "Protestants are called the 'people of the Word' for good reason. The Bible is central to their spirituality, and *sola Scriptura* is their watchword. Thus, the exercise of spiritual reading is a good way to begin their spiritual theology."³³ The greatest weakness to Pentecostal *OHT* has often been to have such a desire to see a spiritual move of God that sometimes biblical exegesis has been placed on the back burners unattended or secondary, as we focused on visual actions and exciting sounds of spiritual manifestations that we have placed on the front burners. But we must embrace what Chan's cautions when he writes, "The spiritual reader intuitively grasps a biblical text as a part of the whole of Scripture."³⁴

In my early ministry, I was confronted by an elder who rebuked me for preaching about the necessity of properly interpreting scriptures. He reminded me of 1 Corinthians

32. Tomlinson, *God's Pioneer*, 139.

33. Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 159.

34. Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 159.

4:19-20 (KJV): “But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.”

He correctly pointed out that the ‘word’ mentioned in that passage was *logos*. Of course, he was correct. But he went on to say that it was more important to have the power of the Holy Spirit in your preaching than to always have the exact hermeneutic correctness in your message. I was aghast to say the least. While he certainly had properly identified the right Greek term *logos*, he had completely changed the context of what Paul was writing about. Paul was not calling for the demonstration of spiritual power without exegetical soundness. He was advocating the need to have quality of word punctuated by the Holy Spirit. To this elder, emotionalism and demonstrativeness were of the highest priority. No one has caught the meaning and balance in preaching better than Frank Macchia:

It is difficult to overestimate the significance of preaching and Scripture in channeling God’s grace to the church. The gospel of Jesus and the scriptural witness come to us through the very breath of God so that we may have the wisdom and power to be saved through faith in Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 3:15-16)...As breathed by the Spirit, the scriptures are a living guide or measure of our worship and witness, not a static deposit to master and control according to our own self-serving ends.³⁵

In the *IOU COGOP*, this fruitful balance was often sacrificed to *OHT* traditions.

There is a vast need for both the accuracy of the Word and the empowerment of the Spirit; they should be held in juxtaposition to one another. Paul’s second letter to Timothy is peppered with the admonition to study and recognize his mentor’s high regard for the Scriptures:

35. Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*, 244.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth...But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 2:15, 3:14-7 (ESV)).

At the same time, Paul stresses the need for the Spirit-Anointed Word by emphasizing how the Spirit and Word should be conjoined to bring about maximum potential in Ephesians 6:10-15. This is ably pointed out by Leslie Diaz-Perez in his thesis on Pentecostal Preaching where he sums up by emphasizing one positive aspect of orality that is spiritually infused:

Prophetic preaching is rooted in the Word of God. Therefore, preaching that is prophetic is cemented in words that bring life-new life in Christ. Preaching that is prophetic is concerned with speaking against evil, sin, remaining in the same stagnant situation; it calls people out of their present situations and reveals God's vision for their lives and speaking to their present circumstances. Prophetic preaching, then, seeks to transform the life and world of the hearer.³⁶

As quantified already, there is no doubt that *OHT* cannot be wholly rejected for it is in this vein that human personality and spiritual empowerment makes the Word come alive.

Summary to the Biblical and Theological Foundations

Orality and Oral Transmission have become in the twenty-first century a popular and polarizing theological issue. This is noted by Barber who penned this viewpoint about the current debate:

With the rise of postmodern sensibilities within the Western academy has come an interdisciplinary ideological bias toward flux and fluidity. This has been reflected in the area of orality studies by an overemphasis on the inherent instability and malleability of orality, features that are seen as offering

36. Leslie Diaz-Perez, *Pentecostal Preaching: Preaching that Enkindles Changes in Soul, Mind and Body* (Chicago, IL: McCormick Theological Seminary, 2012), 25.

emancipation from the oppressive strictures and inflexibility of the written/literate. However, this over-reaction to the modern/literate is beginning to be rebalanced in many quarters as more scholars are exploring orality's full range of capabilities, including its remarkable capacity to conserve tradition even as its creatively reproduces it."³⁷

This statement reveals the complexities of any study or writing on *OHT*, even for the *IOU COGOP* region. Considering all that has been written these last few years on the positive side of orality, for many preachers and churches, this is more than a theological issue or a new phase in Pentecostalism.

Many of these third and fourth generation *COGOP* preachers are still being influenced or challenged because they want to move away from the traditions, interpretations, and polity that has often chained them into archaic practices and institutional paralysis. Indeed, while the faces of the leading players and current strategies may have changed, the practical methodologies and subsequent effects remain entrenched as top positions continue to be deeply rooted in a few.

This influence remains in many ways. It was explained in simple terms by the *COGOP* church historian. Varlack states,

Bishop M. A. Tomlinson who followed his father as our second General Overseer, he would actually state and use the church media, what we call the White Wing Messenger (the name of the *COGOP*'s global magazine). He would use the editorial columns and say things like 'My father said...' So then, very often, he would reprint a full message from his father in that document as his authority and a way of continuing to help guide the church. I have noticed, for example, that we had specific requests, you might say, from the early founders. They had a big emphasis on prophecy – this was the church of prophecy. Even before we had the name, they had that emphasis. Moreover, prophetic preaching about the church became one of the common trends and common influences throughout our church. In fact, there were times if a minister could not preach

37. K. Barber, "Orality and Oral Transmission: Contemporary Interdisciplinary Orality Studies," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, 2nd ed., ed. Joel B Green (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 644.

what was called a ‘Church Message’ you were not considered much of a preacher.³⁸

In like manner, while A. J. Tomlinson and M. A. Tomlinson’s influence may be waning presently, those who have in the last two decades come into the offices of General Overseer (*GO*) and General Presbytery (*GP*) have often followed the same techniques and patterns. Their influence and preaching follow the same authoritarian nature. Since there is no *term limits* for these high offices and only a four (*GP*) or six-year review (*GO*), there is rarely change in any of these top positions. Following in the traditional vein, these positions are still given prominent frontal exposure at Assemblies. Additionally, the *GP*’s have frequented and priority print voice in the official White Wing Messenger as historically practiced in the *COGOP*.

OHT is not inherently or wholly illegitimate. As I have laid out before, there are many cases where it is justified and beneficial. Yet, it can become a real theological miscarriage when it is distorted to create an atmosphere or situation where the progress and health of leadership in the church are impacted negatively. Jesus alludes to this miscarriage by the Pharisees:

And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ “You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.” And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!” (Mark 7:5-9, ESV)

Before concluding this summary of chapter three, there is one more scriptural passage that uncovers the deep theological foundations and syncretism that slowly crept

38. Varlack, interview.

into the *COGOP* mindset. For instance, this led to a belief that was preached and written about stating the idea that ‘being Spirit-filled’ would lead a believer to be sinless and wholly under the control of the Holy Spirit at all times. One passage used to sustain this belief within the *COGOP* states,

For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:14-17)

One church writer cites this above-mentioned scriptural reference as supporting sinlessness and complete control by the Spirit:

To be baptized with the Holy Spirit means to be taken under, to be permeated through and through with the Holy Spirit. Baptized with the Holy Spirit means *the believer becomes totally submissive to the Spirit*. The term ‘baptize’ or ‘baptism’ in the first century literally meant ‘to dip, to immerse, submerge.’ When the believer is baptized by Jesus Christ into the Holy Spirit and comes forth speaking in tongues, he had ‘dipped’ into the power source for Christian living. He who is baptized into the Spirit has *submitted his life to total Spirit control*. He has been totally immersed into the Spirit (italics added for emphasis).³⁹

While the analogy is inspirational and instructive, the use of those two highlighted phrases supports a misleading doctrine of ‘sinless living’ or ‘entire perfection.’ This adopted practice of *OHT* by the *COGOP*, sets up the believer for a downfall when they cannot always live victoriously or completely under the control of the Spirit at all times. The additional truth of ‘walking in the Spirit’ loses its impetus and encouragement (2 Corinthians 10, Ephesians 3) and places the believer under a cloud of fear and disappointment. In the *IOU COGOP*, this legalistic persuasion left scars on many

39. James Stone, *An Introduction to Basic Theology* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing, 1983), 55.

believers and ministers who had to overcome the stigma or feeling of failure that kept them cast down.

How did this happen? The subliminal message that came from the inappropriate use of *OHT* trickled down into *IOU* preaching from other ministers they revered and who traveled out of our International Offices to speak at conventions, retreats and conferences. This would slowly begin to change, and the evidence of this abounds in our historical records. Historian Adrian Varlack speaks to this slow-paced transition:

So, I would say from the decade of the 1980's onward, we were having to deal with the fact that things were changing and that the church needed to relate better to the rest of the Christian world and that sparked an opening for people to look at different views and theologies and so on. And the spread of Pentecostalism, the fact existed that we could not explain why so many other churches or movements were growing so much faster than we were. We could not explain unless we were to say they were 'watering things down' and we were 'holding up the standard' kind of thing. Later on, the power of the old ways began to change, and we have to give credit to some of our leaders that came on around 2008, people like Dr. Hector Ortiz and others that encouraged ministers in the church to work on their formal education.⁴⁰

The pace has been slowly accelerating in the movement away from some of the weaknesses of *OHT* globally in doctrinal beliefs since 1992,⁴¹ but it continues to hang on in areas of upper leadership structure and through traditional administrative practices. But this too is being challenged and is beginning to crumble under immense global pressure from emerging Pentecostal movements among third-world leadership.⁴²

40. Varlack, interview.

41. Church of God of Prophecy, *Minutes: 87th Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing, 1992), 92.

42. Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2007), 20.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

There has been emerging in the modern culture of North American churches a distinct oral/aural homiletic of preaching that is different from the past. In my *IOU* region of the *COGOP*, we have more than twenty-one diverse cultural backgrounds that include many Latinos represented by Mexicans, Peruvians, Columbians, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Salvadorians, Guatemalans, Hondurans, and Southwestern Americanos. In addition, we have many Slavic's represented by Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, and Moldavians. Added to this cultural milieu is Native American Indians represented in the Navajo, Clackamas, Ute and Grand Rhone tribes. Sprinkled in this mixture are Africans from Zimbabwe, Congo, and Nigeria. Finally, there are the European/Anglo foundational pioneers of the *COGOP* heritage groups from the past seven decades.

Oral/Aural Homiletics of Preaching in an Agnostic Climate

In light of these diverse ethnicities, preaching to these various cultures and generations required taking into consideration the oral/aural aspects, since they speak and hear differently. Indeed, Michael Williams makes a valid point when he states, "Our task, then, is to discover an oral/aural homiletic appropriate to describe the speech event we call preaching. To approach such an assignment would require an exploration of the historical, hermeneutical, and phenomenological aspects of orality at the very least."¹ I

1. Michael E. Williams, "Toward an Oral/Aural Homiletic," *Homiletic* 11, no. 1 (June 1986): 1, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=rh&AN=ATLA0001015355&custid=s8455325>.

cite this at this juncture to make clear that the later surveys and interviews took place within the context of multiple oral and aural preaching environments. During the later interview stage, these unique considerations were discussed with participants.

Added to this dynamic, we are engaged in a myriad of cultures today that include some unusual phenomenon. For instance, while some scholars point out that the attention span of people is getting shorter and more agonistic (even polarized from others),² we have observed that people are emotional and hostile toward preaching that infringes upon their cultural identity. Some scholars have called this an *unruly movement*, but this would depend on how a person perceives *OHT*. Miller and Yamamori make an excellent observation:

Wherever it emerges, Pentecostalism tends to indigenize, absorbing the local culture in the way it worships, organizes itself, and relates to the local community. In searching for a metaphor to describe the growth of Pentecostalism, we were struck with the idea that the movement is more like a wild shrub than a tree with symmetrical branches. Shrubs tend to have multiple offshoots and often appear chaotic until they are pruned into shape or trained on a trellis.³

This explains vividly the many new immigrant churches that are in the *IOU COGOP*, they are bringing into our region many different ideas and methodologies that exhibit strange twists in how they organize and grow, yet they evidence a past DNA that reveals an *OHT* that is definitively entrenched in their doctrinal beliefs and polity that come from the original planting of the *COGOP* in their nations of origin.

One of the unique characteristics emerging from the *OHT* background of many of our congregations is their long-rooted styles of worship and their public response to

2. Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: New Accents, 1982), 37-49.

3. Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2007), 211.

preaching. While this would be disruptive to many ministers while they were preaching, this traditional primitive cry and the subsequent *glossolalia* (speaking in tongues) is anticipated and garnered by many preachers. Simply stated, *OHT* has a definite bearing on how some preach and how some receive this spoken word. Amos Wilder expresses it when speaking of the new speech forms and ways of communicating that oral cultures used. The more they were awakened to the fullness of being, the more they were made aware of our world and the possibilities for us within it.⁴ This makes *OHT* even more impacting because each culture has utilized this methodology to anchor their people into Christianity, especially among Pentecostals. It was this recognition that *OHT* and its cultural differences have contributed immensely to the way various congregations' worship. Moreover, the style, the content and distant historical diversity of how ministers preach demonstrates in the *IOU COGOP* that there has been a harmonizing effect by a central doctrine and polity that spread throughout the greater corpus. This is exhibited in the survey results that follow and it reveals the evidence of diversity, but the unifying influence of *OHT*.

Methodology and Type of Survey

The intention of this methodology was to make an excellent cross-cultural survey of all *IOU COGOP* pastors and ministers. I enlisted the feedback from all of our five distinct cultures: Latino, Slavic, African, Native American, and Western European. By addressing these unique ethnicities, I felt I could get a reliable understanding of how *OHT* had formed and informed *COGOP* leadership even in their nation of origin. The

4. Amos Wilder, *The Language of the Gospel: Early Christian Rhetoric* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 44-45.

surveys were done with twenty-six participants from Western European ancestry, thirty participants who immigrated from Latin American nations, ten immigrants from Slavic nations, four immigrants from African nations, and ten from Native American roots. From extensive surveys of ministers in the *IOU* region, the multi-cultural influence will be weighed against the corporate ecclesial body's influence. The intent of the mailed survey was to discover their responses regarding six specific areas of preaching. These would be sent to eighty participants in a study of *COGOP* ministers in Oregon, Idaho, and Utah. All fifty pastors in the *IOU* region were invited to be participants in the survey. These elements were further demarcated into specific questions that would probe deeper into the six roots of spousal influence, effects of ethnicity or culture, personality or disposition, educational impact, the strength of integrity, and the foundation of tradition laid by the church and parents.⁵

These ministers were given an ample time of four weeks to study the questions and return their completed surveys. All cover letters and surveys were made accessible in the languages of English, Spanish, and Russian. To ensure diversity, fifty of the participants would be Lead Pastors and thirty would be ministers in other local ministerial positions (like associates or youth pastors). Sixty of the participants were male ministers and twenty are female ministers. Moreover, to avoid reluctance to answer questions or contaminate results, ministerial participants were not required to place their names on the surveys. They were not required to write any answers out, but simply check boxes giving four to six choices of answers. For instance, these answers were categorized as *Yes, No, Sometimes, Never*. Another form of answers was subdivided into six

5. See Appendix 1.

categories; for instance: *The Bible Only, The Bible and Other Books, The Internet, Other Preachers, Spouse or Family, Peers*. Other categories of answers were utilized to ascertain who or what influenced their preaching: *Your Parents, Your Pastor, Other Preachers, Your Church, College or Seminary You Attended*. Each set of answers were utilized to get the clearest understanding of who or what was influencing their preaching. For their privacy, they were supplied with a pre-printed address label from my office, so no writing style or spelling would identify them. Their own addresses were not to be included on the preprinted return envelope. Since the surveys were mailed in three languages, three questions have been prepared to identify race, language, gender, age range, and cultural origin. The surveys were sent back anonymously on a pre-set numbered form in a format that no person could duplicate or share with others. There was a fixed period of no more than four weeks for them to return forms to maintain control and assure submission. A neutral and confidential third-party was recruited to compile, categorize, and record all the results of the surveys. All twenty-one questions have four to six boxes where they can check only one answer.

The survey⁶ contained the following questions covering six elements of preaching and the background that influenced their homiletical style or content.

1. Do you consider your spouse's feedback important to your increased effectiveness as a preacher?
2. Have you ever asked your spouse what he or she thought of your sermon?
3. Does your spouse's reaction or presence help you when you are preaching?
4. Please check the appropriate boxes that identify your ethnic or racial background?

6. See Appendix 1.

5. Do you believe that your cultural background, race or ethnicity has ever hindered your preaching or teaching before a congregation?
6. Has anyone ever told you that your voice or mannerisms in the pulpit were influenced by your cultural background, race or ethnicity?
7. Do you believe that the history or theology of your cultural background affected how you preach in your church?
8. Does the background, race or ethnicity of your audience affect how you preach?
9. Check one of the four boxes below to indicate your temperament or personality?
10. How would others describe your temperament or style of preaching? Choose one answer below that best designates your answer.
11. What is your highest formal level of education? Choose one answer below.
12. Do you think that your education has had a positive effect on your preaching?
13. Where do you get most of your knowledge or understanding about a biblical truth that you use in your preaching?
14. Have you ever used a sermon in the pulpit based on the historical/theological beliefs of the *COGOP* without exegeting (or interpreting) the verse or passage by your own research?
15. Do you believe people's trust in your word helps your sermons?
16. Have you ever shared personal information about someone else in the pulpit?
17. In preaching, do you quote sources you have found and then used in your sermon?
18. Have traditions or customs you have learned as a child affected the way you preach today?

19. Do you believe that a minister must have the anointing of the Holy Spirit when preparing and delivering a sermon?

20. Who was the greatest influence over the years in your pulpit ministry?

21. What is your attitude or belief about preaching and how many years have you been a minister in the *COGOP*?

There has been much knowledge gained by reading all the surveys from these leaders. Out of these eighty leaders, fifty were pastors and ten were pastor's wives who also serve as ordained ministers. My analysis unmistakably proves the power of *OHT* in their lives and in their preaching. There are positives and negatives that have been shared, but there is a resounding voice in all the participants of thankfulness for those individuals who passed on orally the knowledge and experience that caused them to follow in their faith toward Jesus Christ. Most of the disparagement is against the legalistic churches or institutions that made traditions equal to the Word of God. There is also a clear demarcation between those who grew up in urban areas and those raised in rural communities; those in poor or agrarian areas were steeped the deepest in the teachings of their elders and pastors. Nevertheless, there is an overwhelming appreciation toward most parents and grandparents who were instrumental in causing these participants in the survey to be given good oral history or theology. At the same time, there is also a deep appreciation for the guidance of the Holy Spirit that seemed to lead them into the Scriptures or into making wise decisions, even when the family did not have the full understanding to do so. Another revelation from these surveys were the life-changing negative effects of *OHT*; there is no way to avoid seeing that we must do a better job of recognizing and reinforcing healthy methods of passing on our faith to our children.

Subsequent Follow-up and Interviews

There were follow-up interviews with twenty participants. This was done to discover if all ages, gender, and cultural groups consistently cite the belief that their *OHT* had a major influence in the exegesis, content, and delivery of their preaching. An expected outcome of these interviews will or will not support a theory I have studied on social traits and the reality that culture is more defined than just by race or ethnicity.⁷ No doubt, the *COGOP* culture is far more influential than some would expect. These interviews focused on in-depth interviews done at the *IOU COGOP* Pastors' Enrichment Retreat⁸ with preachers who represented different cultural backgrounds. Specifically, there would be six areas addressed that contain nine questions. They were employed with this group of twenty pastors representing all five cultures who are being interviewed to identify words, feelings, and other elements. This would help my research to be better informed of what or who influenced them in their preaching and ministerial formation.

All interviewed participants agreed to allow themselves to be identified for this project and their names are noted in the footnotes and they all signed an *informed consent form* that we have retained.⁹ These interviews did not require an extensive explanation for the participant to understand in order to share candid answers. The key purpose of this carefully chosen methodology is to ask straightforward questions that identify the impact of *OHT* on *IOU COGOP* pastors. It will aid in understanding their preaching habits, styles and the people who influenced them. The interview was designed to detect their

7. Xiao Wang, "Culture, Ethnicity, and Race," *Boundless* (blog), Focus on the Family, March 3, 2017, <https://www.boundless.org/blog/>.

8. Wallace Pratt, *Pastoral In-depth Interviews* (Seaside, OR: Pastors Enrichment Retreat, October 20, 2018).

9. See Appendix 2.

cultural peculiarities and influencers. The outcome of the interviews confirmed *OHT* influence and further noted the expectations placed upon these ministers by the *COGOP* as they preached in their pulpits. All twenty highlighted their feelings of coercion to preach certain *OHT* dogma. These private sessions were done in a separate room with each person, but answers often were similar or almost identical, so initials identify each individual. After each question, answers follow in italics to make them easier to identify.

At this point, an examination of six distinct areas (A through F)¹⁰ are explored through in-depth interviews that are differentiated into the following categories:

- A. “How would you describe the way in which biblical truth was transmitted to you growing up in your culture? For instance, was it based solely on Scripture or did you also learn from your parents, family or a pastor and other elders, about how they lived out or spoke to you from their experiences?”

Biblical truths were transmitted to me by my parents. The real testimony began in our home; my parents heard from God’s word when they were young and started to live it in the home. They took it seriously and started to live by Scripture. They were a great example to us kids (PV, JC; Mexicans).¹¹

Through the testimony of a preacher who led me to Jesus. I cannot say I learned much from my parents and relatives, to them God punished without mercy. I began to learn through pastors and teachers where experiences and spiritual formation took place. I did not grow up in a Christian home. In my twenties, my parents came to the Lord from

10. The following footnotes on each participant in the interviews are included to attest to the legitimacy of the process and each has signed a consent form.

11. Patty Valtierra and Jorge Cervantes, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

Catholicism to Pentecostalism. This had a mixed effect on our family, but still many traditions carried over from childhood (JP, SC; Mexicans).¹²

Biblical truth was transmitted through preaching or teaching by pastors and leaders. In Guatemala, most people are not encouraged to read, but my teachers encouraged me to memorize scripture. I learned a lot from listening and reading, but my parents helped (LA; Guatemalan).¹³

My family had a hard life, much drugs, and violence. My mother was a Christian, but my father was not a good man. We learned about God from mom and a little church we attended. Things were hard though because we never learned because we never went to school much. We also never had the opportunity to have a healthy church to go to in our town; it was very hard (IC; Guatemalan).¹⁴

In the Dominican Republic, the biblical truth was always transmitted by the preaching and teaching of pastors and leaders. Many of the people were not encouraged to study the Bible for themselves, much of what we learned was taught by church leaders and my parents just agreed to it (DD; Dominican).¹⁵

Most of what I learned was from my family and from our local pastor. We were raised under very harsh legalism and so we really never could pray or have the Holy Spirit lead us. Honestly, I think this is why I have problem in my marriage submitting to authority (YC; Honduran).¹⁶

12. Jonas Palacios and Shirley Castro, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

13. Luis Armas, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

14. Izai Chojolan, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

15. Dionicia Delgado, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

16. Yulisa Cadenas, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

Through evangelism, but the preachers used a lot of fear to motivate conversions. Our families were close but there was no emphasis on personal discipleship but simply obedience (JP, GH; Peruvian).¹⁷

We were raised Catholic, but our parents converted when we were children to Pentecostalism. Our supervisor of COGOP was instrumental in introducing us to the Lord and to the Word of God; we really did not do a lot of biblical studies ourselves but relied on a pastor to teach us (SP, DM; Salvadorian).¹⁸

Definitely, parents had a big impact on me. They lived the gospel, so it was easier to be introduced to Jesus Christ. We had a Christian Worldview, but we had a lot of traditions that were taught as truth and made us legalistic. Later, missionaries from COGOP were influential to me (YB, TP; Ukrainian).¹⁹

Bible Truth was transmitted to me by my culture and by my mother (parents) who really loved the Lord. We not only learned the Bible at home, but we were preached to and taught the Scriptures; we were expected to live by very strict teachings as ministers interpreted them for us. (SD, MH; American).²⁰

We attended church from time to time or not at all, but there were no established beliefs other than what we heard from preachers and teachers from a Pentecostal church. While we learned the Scriptures from early on, there was not a clear or precise history-theology in writing (RP, LP; American).²¹

17. Jimmy Poma and Gladys Hinojo, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

18. Suzy Poma and Douglas Martinez, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

19. Yuriy Bigun and Tamila Pechko, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

20. Steven David and Monte Holt, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

21. Rodney Plumley and Lois Pebworth, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

In our village, people never went to school, so we got all our information from tribal elders or from our mothers; fathers rarely attended the house of prayer, so we did what we were told by the tribal elders, pastors and most of all by our mother. This is how we knew God. There were many things we were told and others we observed, but we were not permitted to question our spiritual leaders or the stories they told us about our churches and our past (FK, FM; African).²²

- B. “How do you feel the traditions of your family or culture impacted your beliefs about Jesus Christ, the church, the kingdom and about other Christians or sinners? Were these experiences good or bad in helping you understand and share Jesus?”

Tradition in my family was a very big thing; in some ways, it helped and in other ways, it hurt us. We were Catholics and we did not go to church regularly. Prayer was common to see, but not much of what I saw affected my beliefs. I was blind to a lot of things (JC, JP, and SC; Mexican).²³

Traditions were not a problem for me because my parents never taught me any; most of our people had in their homes ‘home-made’ idols they worshipped and prayed to daily (PV; Mexican).²⁴

22. Faustin Kilongo and Frank Mbama, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

23. Jorge Cervantes, Jonas Palacios, and Shirley Castro, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

24. Patty Valtierra, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

*We were trained in the Bible a great deal. My dad would stay up at night to teach us from the Bible, so we had good training. He was opposed to traditions not based on the Bible (LA; Guatemalan).*²⁵

*Most everything was traditions from my mother. Papa was not a Christian (IC; Guatemala).*²⁶

*I really did not get to know the Word of God through my family or Catholic culture. It was not until I left the Dominican Republic and went to New York at 16 that I heard it from a friend who was a Christian Pentecostal. Even there, we had to adhere to a lot of rules and practices (DD; Dominican).*²⁷

*Most of my family experiences were good, but my local church was not helpful. During my early years, traditions and customs were taught like the gospel and we had to obey them the same. Many times I see in my home the effects of how we were raised under such legalism (YC; Honduran).*²⁸

*The tradition was a major influence; too much criticism about dress, make-up, and our speech. My experience was that we had to exclude a lot of good friends because we really knew nothing about God. Most of what we were told not to do was from preaching or from our parents (JP, GH; Peruvian).*²⁹

Traditions were very influential in our beliefs; going to a Pentecostal church meant your only option was losing your family. Our former Catholicism belief was so

25. Luis Armas, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

26. Izai Chojolan, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

27. Dionicia Delgado, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

28. Yulisa Cadenas, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

29. Jimmy Poma and Gladys Hinojo, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

strong that it taught us that we were lazy people if we did not go; but to Pentecostals, we were not even saved (SP, DM; Salvadorian).³⁰

Slavic culture has positive and negative effects. In our case, Scripture became the dividing moment as to what to accept or reject. We found many traditions in our church that were not biblical and so we eventually rejected them. Many of our relatives did not leave these traditions and were very limited in their ability to help other people to follow after the Lord (YB, TP; Ukrainian).³¹

Since we believed we were the one true Church, it made me think of all the other Christians as second class. If they were not in our church, they were being led astray. My parents were the main influence and they were fully sold out to our COGOP doctrine and traditions (SD, RP; American).³²

We came from a Pentecostal background, but we accepted everyone the same. My family was not a very judgmental group, although the church we attended often had people that were very critical of others. My family acceptance of others tempered my church beliefs (MH, LP; American).³³

In the Congolese culture, we knew who Jesus was and the stories always made Him be very special, but the church was confusing, and we never understood very much (FK, FM; African).³⁴

30. Suzy Poma and Douglas Martinez, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

31. Yuriy Bigun and Tamila Pechko, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

32. Steven David and Rodney Plumley, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

33. Monte Holt and Lois Pebworth, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

34. Faustin Kilongo and Frank Mbama, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

C. “How did you learn to be a leader? Did your ideas of leadership come from others in your local church, in your original nation’s culture, in your biblical study, or from traditions that were orally passed on to you?”

There is no doubt that the Holy Spirit has taught me since I was young, but we learned a lot from other pastors, leaders, and teachers. The Bible was a big help, as well as the COGOP. Watching the example and listening to leaders was a big part of my training (JP, SC, and JC; Mexican).³⁵

I must confess that one book called Nehemiah has been my best teacher and guide when it comes to leadership because I could not rely on my past traditions, leaders or parents (PV; Mexican).³⁶

Among Guatemalans, oral traditions and teaching are the only way the average person ever learns about Jesus. We were fortunate that even though our neighborhoods were not always the safest of places, parents had a great role to play in teaching us by their example (LA, IC; Guatemalan).³⁷

Actually, the Holy Spirit helped me a lot, but it was by the guidance of a female pastor that had the greatest influence on my leadership skills. This is also one of my weaknesses (DD; Dominican).³⁸

Leadership was learned mostly in my late teen years since my earlier years were so difficult. We learned everything from watching our pastors and leaders in our local

35. Jonas Palacios, Shirley Castro, and Jorge Cervantes, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

36. Patty Valtierra, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

37. Luis Armas and Izai Chojolan, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

38. Dionicia Delgado, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

church; the Bible never seemed to be used to talk or explain leadership to us (YC; Hondaran).³⁹

My leadership knowledge was very limited; it came mainly through Bible studies and sermons. There was no personal training or mentoring whatsoever in our Peruvian churches (JP, GH; Peruvian).⁴⁰

In our case, we found that leadership is determined by three factors; local church culture, mentoring, and traditions. Our mentors tried very hard but were limited by their knowledge. Also, parents and grandparents had a big influence on how we developed as leaders (SP, DM; Salvadorian).⁴¹

Our leadership ideas came from other leaders in Ukraine, but reading and study helped us to go beyond those we were exposed to, especially later after coming to the United States (YB, TP; Ukrainian).⁴²

I am not sure I am a leader, although I am a pastor? I learned from people I served under over the years. My big regret is not having enough good formal education in leadership that I could use in my ministry. There were no mentors, but we did have a lot of dynamic preachers to look up to, but even they were often not well trained in formal education (RP, MH, and SD; American).⁴³

Women were not considered leaders much when I was growing up in the church. This made me struggle for years to finally accept that God had called me to pastor.

39. Yulisa Cadenas, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

40. Jimmy Poma and Gladys Hinojo, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

41. Suzy Poma and Douglas Martinez, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

42. Yuriy Bigun and Tamila Pechko, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

43. Rodney Plumley, Monte Holt, and Steven David, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

Therefore, I do not classify myself even today as a good leader. Tradition did not inspire us to leadership (LP; American).⁴⁴

D. “Was leadership orally passed on to you from someone, if so, who were they?

Would you say that someone had a huge influence on informing you as to your own way of studying for sermons and the methods used in preaching?”

There is no doubt that leadership was orally passed on to me by pastors and overseers I heard speak and learned from. We had teachers who taught us their methods, but I did not always know if everything we learned was correct (JP, JC, and PV; Mexican).⁴⁵

Leadership by my parents was passed on to me orally, absolutely. They showed a lot of love and respect for pastors. They were willing to do whatever they were asked to do. We did not always know what we were doing or if it was the correct way, but this is how we were trained (SC; Mexican).⁴⁶

I am sure that most of what I learned about leadership came orally from pastors, parents and other influential leaders. Even a military officer helped me to grow in leadership (LA; Guatemalan).⁴⁷

I had very little training in leadership because my home and church life was so inadequate; therefore, I relied a lot on my wife after we were married, and she was very untraditional (IC; Guatemalan).⁴⁸

44. Lois Pebworth, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

45. Jonas Palacios, Jorge Cervantes & Patty Valtierra, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

46. Shirley Castro, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

47. Luis Armas, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

48. Izai Chojolan, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

Leadership was passed on to me orally by my pastor and later by a women's leader (DD; Dominican).⁴⁹

Yes, leadership was passed on orally by our pastor, but he was a very passive leader and provided very little formal training for us. I do not know what methods of leadership there are (YC; Honduran).⁵⁰

When we were growing up in the COGOP there were no teachings on leadership. Many of us were not given the privilege to be leaders or train because they did not believe we lived holy enough. This impacted our own leadership and we became insecure leaders and pastors (JP, GH; Peruvian).⁵¹

Between my parents and our pastor, I began to understand and learn more about leadership. My grandparents were the real mentors because they lived out their leadership roles (SP, DM; Salvadoran).⁵²

American missionaries played a big role in raising new leaders in Ukraine after Perestroika. Sixty years of communism had left us with no leadership training since most church services were only done in small home settings to avoid authorities. These missionaries came like fathers to us and not just as instructors. They taught us good leadership methods that they exhibited (YB, TP; Ukrainian).⁵³

My mom had the greatest influence on me while growing up; she taught me a lot about practical common sense and wisdom to have in leadership. She used the Bible to show me (SD; American).⁵⁴

49. Dionicia Delgado, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

50. Yulisa Cadenas, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

51. Jimmy Poma and Gladys Hinojo, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

52. Susy Poma and Douglas Martínez, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

53. Yuriy Bigun and Tamila Pechko, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

54. Steven David, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

There were many pastors, teachers, and overseers that taught me a great deal about leadership from the way they did things or what they taught. But there was very little formal training; these men taught me a lot about how things should be done (RP, MH, and LP; American).⁵⁵

E. "Theology is what we believe about God. Therefore, how did you form your understanding about God, especially about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?"

All of the responses from Mexico were almost the same: We did not understand the Trinity or God from our years of growing up in the COGOP. The doctrine was ignored except for the teaching of tradition that Mary was like part of God as the Holy Mother. While unlike Catholics, we did not worship Mary, we believed she was part of His family in heaven. We did not understand the concept of three-in-one but believed the Father was the final authority and above the others. In recent years, we had proper training by our professors from GCTS and our regional overseer to learn more (JP, JC, SC, and PV; Mexican).⁵⁶

I learned nothing about the nature of God while growing up in rural Guatemala, we simply did what we were told to do and there was limited opportunity to study. But now I am beginning to learn more, and it excites me to be in a Bible institute in the USA that is teaching me (IC; Guatemalan).⁵⁷

55. Rodney Plumley, Monte Holt, and Lois Pebworth, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

56. Jonas Palacios, Jorge Cervantes, Shirley Castro, and Patty Valtierra, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

57. Izai Chojolan, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

I learned a lot from my pastor in Guatemala City about God and the Trinity. He did not just preach on things like healing and demon possession but demonstrated it in his ministry in and around the church. It was certainly oral teaching, but pastor linked it to the Word of God (LA; Guatemalan).⁵⁸

By Bible studies, I learned about God, by God's love and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I admit I do not have a great understanding of the nature of God or the Trinity (DD; Dominican).⁵⁹

My pastors taught me a lot about the Trinity, but much of it was what they had heard, and it was not in accordance with Scripture. I learned after I got to the USA about God's true nature (YC; Honduran).⁶⁰

I learned orally from those who preached about God in Peru; we never had any studies or lesson on the nature of the Trinity. After I came to the USA, I learned as an adult about the Trinity and that they are not three gods separated by just duties or a hierarchal nature (JP, GH; Peruvian).⁶¹

I was a minister before I began to understand the Trinity a little bit. Most preaching or teaching I heard confused me and there seemed to be a lot of opinions. Later on, a pastor came that helped me to understand and appreciate the unique relationship of the Trinity (SP, DM; Salvadoran).⁶²

58. Luis Armas, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

59. Dionicia Delgado, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

60. Yulisa Cadenas, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

61. Jimmy Poma and Gladys Hinojo, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

62. Susy Poma and Douglas Martínez, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

In Ukraine, we did not learn much about the nature of God. What we preached was what we heard preached. When missionaries arrived to start Bible Colleges, we learned more (YB, TP; Ukrainian).⁶³

Most of what we knew about God's nature was learned in Sunday school; they did a good job with simple illustrations that often later proved wrong (the egg example). Most of what we know today about the Trinity comes from better-trained professors/bishops (SD, RP, MH, and LP; American).⁶⁴

F. “Please share anything you feel was orally communicated to you and how it has impacted the way you lead people?”

Nothing has impacted me more than an exemplary leader who uses the in-depth word of God to teach us leadership. I recall only a few of that caliber who were that dedicated to teaching and living the Word. Rather than relying on past oral traditions and practices, they have taken us forward into truth without destroying traditions that do not contradict the Word (JP, JC, and SC; Mexican).⁶⁵

While most of what I know today was orally communicated to me, I have a passion to share the Word with others. Even though it was sometimes wrong, through the Holy Spirit I made it (PV; Mexican).⁶⁶

63. Yuriy Bigun and Tamila Pechko, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

64. Steven David, Rodney Plumley, Monte Holt, and Lois Pebworth, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

65. Jonas Palacios, Jorge Cervantes, and Shirley Castro, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

66. Patty Valtierra, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

I believe my mistakes were overcome because leaders allowed me to make them and then helped me go on and learn the Bible. Their example and patience are what got me through (LA, IC; Guatemalan).⁶⁷

I have always felt I had a divine call; this was passed on by other preachers and leaders to me over the years. Their testimonies were confirmed by God's love and Spirit to me (DD; Dominican).⁶⁸

Pastors and leaders have often spoken to me to tell me I had a special ministry and anointing, but only since leaving Honduras have I begun to learn from teachers what that means (YC; Honduran).⁶⁹

I was trained by parents and pastors when younger to always be the same to everyone regardless of who they are or the position they hold. Leadership means learning to me now (JP, GH; Peruvian).⁷⁰

The greatest thing taught orally to me has proved accurate in Word and Spirit; whatever I invested in Christ would be worth every penny. This is our Salvadoran tradition (SP, DM; Salvadoran).⁷¹

The stories I remember most were told to me orally by former Christians who were once imprisoned in Siberia for preaching the Bible in Ukraine. Their stories inspire my ministry like no book or school could ever do (YB, TP; Ukrainian).⁷²

The word of God teaches us, preachers and teachers can instruct us, but people like Jesus are able to inspire us more than anything. Since we were children, we had

67. Luis Armas and Izai Chojolan, Guatemalan interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

68. Dionicia Delgado, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

69. Yulisa Cadenas, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

70. Jimmy Poma and Gladys Hinojo, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

71. Susy Poma and Douglas Martínez, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

72. Yuriy Bigun and Tamila Pechko, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

many wonderful pastors, parents, and faithful saints who demonstrated what it meant to be a follower of the Lord. [On this final question, all the respondents in this USA group, cited how they had observed the commitment of leaders for God that they had prized highly in their lives] (SD, MH, RP, and LP; American).⁷³

We were told a lot of stories at night around our campfires and when the men gathered together, but most were only legends which some doubted were true. Our mothers told us many things about God that they learned from missionaries. Some were true and some we found later to be false (FK, FM; African).⁷⁴

Most of what I learned came from other ministers who taught me many things, especially regarding the Church of God of Prophecy. Sometimes they used the Bible, but they also repeated many things that they heard at our General Assemblies that they attended. I think that most of what they preached was true, but occasionally I was disappointed later on when I learned they were sometimes wrong. We heard a lot of quotes by Tomlinson or another prominent official in the COGOP (AR; American).⁷⁵

OHT is both a positive and negative method, we must take time to train pastors, teachers, and parents on the benefits and dangers of this process. I have come away from these interviews on preaching and *OHT* with many mixed feelings (both encouraged and sometimes disappointed). These twenty participants may have overcome some weaknesses of *OHT*, yet the evidence shows they were impacted in many good and lasting ways by this irrefutable discipleship tool. There still remains some scars on their theology and preaching habits. In an appropriate analysis of his own, Macchia states:

73. Steven David, Monte Holt, Rodney Plumley, and Lois Pebworth, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

74. Faustin Kilongo and Frank Mbama, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

75. Anthony Roberts, interview by author, Seaside, OR., October 20, 2018.

“Such insights into how Pentecostals do theology can also help us distinguish ourselves from the dominant fundamentalist hermeneutic shared among our most severe critics. The Pentecostals...were more interested in discerning truth and authority of Scripture spiritually.”⁷⁶ I would concur after completing these twenty interviews; all of them expressed a desire to follow the Spirit in understanding and living the Word. Conversely, many people who have not developed their theology from *OHT* are sometimes just as confused and off-centered in their theology, even after study at a seminary or biblical institute.

Summary of the Cautions and Essentials found in *OHT*

There was a time when Pentecostals, including the *IOU COGOP* preachers, did not address fully or biblically the theology they advocated or embraced. The situation is now changing rapidly in all parts of the globe as education and acceptance are gaining ground very rapidly. Even so, we must address the strengths and weaknesses of *OHT*, and these two elements can be reconciled if cautiously discerned and appropriately dealt with. It is possible, as most participants shared in the earlier interviews, to lose sight of an important component they brought from the lands they immigrated from when they came to North America. While their indigenous *OHT* carried certain risks and theological inaccuracies, their faith also contained a Pentecostal urgency and gospel message that was quickly being removed from our churches by the new society that acculturates them with new philosophies of secularism and materialism. When this happens, something dynamic and life-changing is being siphoned from their faith.

76. Frank D. Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit: Creation, Redemption, and the Triune God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), 52.

Richard Shaull observes,

More and more they are turning to religion for salvation. But the salvation they are seeking is an experience of the presence and power of God here and now, capable of bringing relief from hunger, misery, and violence, filling them with a sense of their own worth before God and others, and empowering them to put their broken lives together and change their life situation. They long for a religious experience that helps them to bear and overcome their suffering and fills their hearts with joy and peace. In their abandonment, they yearn to belong to a community whose members share their joys and griefs and help each other to survive from one day to the next...As we consider this shift in religious perspective, we should also keep in mind that it is occurring primarily among people in the non-Western world who have not been immersed for centuries in the culture of modernity, with the modern scientific worldview and the secular mentality that accompanies it. This new religious orientation is also appealing to significant numbers of those in our Western world who, having been brought up on this worldview, are now rejecting it or at least seeking to experience dimensions of reality excluded by it.⁷⁷

He is very correct. This rising dilemma will have to be addressed as we move forward with caution so as not to lose the positive elements in indigenous *OHT* that must be retained and even embraced as they learn better theology to move away from the negative aspects.

There is a critical factor that we addressed earlier, and we dare not ignore it at this pivotal point. Over my years in the *IOU COGOP*, I have been able to make monumental strides and establish not only a passion among our leadership for Christian education, but also retain respect for the past leaders and preaching that effectively touched people's lives. Much of this has been done because great care was taken to build trusting and growing relationships with pastors that were missing when I came into this region in 2004. With this in mind, I came across a book called *Dirt Matters*. In this volume, Jim

77. Richard Shaull, "What Can the Mainline Learn from Pentecostals about Pentecost Preaching?" *Journal for Preachers* 21, no. 4 (1998): 9.

Powell has encapsulated the positive side of *OHT* that we need to retain or recover. He writes,

The New Testament is all about relationships, yet it's easy for us to reduce the church to titles, positions, and impersonal truth. We can be tempted to flex our muscles and tell people what they are supposed to do and believe, rather than walking alongside them. Without emphasizing relationships, we are missing a key component of the New Testament, and we are limiting our ability to influence culture. Trying to instill new values and getting people to think differently are not just intellectual exercises; they are emotional investments. Many times, people resist because they are scared, or they don't grasp why change is necessary.⁷⁸

This is precisely why every preacher should be cautious about wholesale changes to the traditions, cultures, and practices of past generations. Many of these can still retain nuggets or boat-size portions of necessary components we need to cultivate into our relationships.

After this study on the impact and vastness of *OHT*, the outcome produced by a combination of research, surveys, and interviews, made me acutely aware of many of its good qualities even in the *IOU COGOP*. These must be explored if we are to move positively forward. Hereafter, there remained a need to assess further the preliminary results of this research through a series of questions that they have generated. These will be addressed more thoroughly in chapter five when examining and reviewing the outcomes and conclusions that will lead toward a final summary:

- Do responses reveal the complexities or challenges of preaching within a culture or tradition, as well as yielding more traditional challenges for female ministers?

78. Jim Powell, *Dirt Matters: The Foundation for a Healthy, Vibrant, and Effective Congregation* (Bloomington, ID: West Bow Press, 2013), 138.

- Does the participant believe that adherence solely to the Biblical text in homiletics is practiced as consistently as they do obedience to the preaching ministry of the *COGOP*?
- Will we be able to observe whether those serving over twenty years in pastoral positions did or did not feel adequately trained before entering ministry?
- Do participants feel that the *COGOP* had a theology that relied too much on the institutional, traditional and cultural precedence of its founding pioneers?
- Did they learn to preach based on beliefs of their family, pastors and other peers?
- Did parishioners have little, or no theological understanding based on the Bible?
- Do they believe that education can affect personality and integrity issues?
- How do we train the Emerging Leaders in the *COGOP* in the *IOU*?
- What subjects need to be researched and implemented to provide a better understanding of cross-cultural needs and the subsequent training it will require for better preaching?
- How do they view what they have learned in the last ten years from our *IOU* Biblical Institutes and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in comparison to biblical history/theology from past denominational leaders?
- After years of *OHT* influence in the *COGOP*, do you believe leadership at the *COGOP* International Office has a full grasp of the challenge of leadership in the *IOU*?
- If the *COGOP* International Offices do not comprehend the lingering dynamics that are affecting the *IOU* region, how can we help them to understand and change these factors?

- Finally, will this counterbalance between *OHT* and modernity require a new format of training to help ministers preach more effectively than we presently have in our region?

This chapter is not designed to give all the answers to the questions posed beforehand or in this section. Instead, the questions and other discoveries from the surveys and interviews are utilized to start an on-going discussion and some solutions that will be examined in chapter five. Whatever the results, the fact that leaders were allowed to honestly express their own feelings and observations of the past, present, and future has already opened doors for better communications. This is certainly an excellent path forward for those entrusted to speak the *oracles* of God.

In retrospect, Mott sums up well how my project seeks to document the influence of *OHT* in the *IOU COGOP* region: “Human personality develops through the process of encounter in culture. We become aware of our own existence as we experience ourselves and see the results of our activity in the attitudes and responses of those with whom we are in close reciprocal relationship.”⁷⁹ In light of this observation about “close personal relationship,” I believe this study of the influence of *OHT* on preaching will be beneficial in future adjustments and training of leaders in the *IOU* region of the Church of God of Prophecy. Through various cultural backgrounds in Global Pentecostalism, the evidence of *OHT* is visibly seen and historically recorded. It is my intent that this project will aid in documenting its place and influence in the *COGOP*, and in particular the *IOU*.

Moreover, we want this research to guide our regional leadership to adhere more closely to proper exegesis in all our preaching and teaching throughout our churches and

79. Stephen Charles Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*, vol 2 (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 102-103.

conferences. As Willis C. Hoover explained long ago, “The reading of the Word must always have preeminence over any manifestation of the Spirit. Those under the power of the Spirit are never ‘out of it.’ ‘The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets’ (1 Corinthians 14:32).”⁸⁰ Within this quote is the reality that much of what has been preached and taught has relied on an *OHT* that did not always align itself with good hermeneutical disciplines. Yet, there is also the counterbalance that requires us to move cautiously forward so as not to discard something we may never be able to reclaim.

80. Willis Collins Hoover, *History of the Pentecostal Revival in Chile: Including Personal Memoir of Mario G. Hoover* (Santiago, Chile: I.E.P. Corporation Publishing House, 2000), 227.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINAL SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND FUTURE STUDIES

There is a definite recognition that Oral History/Theology has impacted many denominations and even independent churches; having stated the undeniable, the Church of God of Prophecy has also been influenced by this persuasion. This consequently is applicable to the *COGOP* region of Idaho, Oregon and Utah. In order to maintain neutrality within the context of this study, other influencers must be acknowledged. Confessing this reality, one cannot always insinuate that it was because of unbiblical preaching or poor theology. Sometimes this effect was generated by factors such as neglect of the context where the churches were established or by ignoring the cultures where congregations were being planted. One detail that emerged from the interviews was how the cultures where the *COGOP* was planted were sometimes ignored in the earlier times as the prevailing church culture of the *COGOP* took a proprietary mode.¹

Caleb Kaltenbach has given an insightful summation of this dilemma over context:

A preacher can have the right meaning of a text, correct theology, good ideas from a passage, and yet it may not matter. You can't communicate to a community that you haven't studied or experienced. I don't care if it is a rural town in Kansas or the booming city of Tokyo. The communicator has to study—not only the culture and trends of state and country, but also the immediate context...Culture is different though. Culture is always changing because people are always changing. People's ideas, trends, hot topics, focus, politics, and so on are always shifting. A person could understand culture one year and then the next year, their understanding is already somewhat out of date. It's a difficult but

1. Wallace Pratt, *Pastoral In-depth Interviews* (Seaside, OR: Pastors Enrichment Retreat, October 20, 2018), 31-32.

necessary task. It was something Paul dedicated himself to (and he was an expert at studying culture because he started several churches in different contexts).²

Maintaining Neutrality within the Context of this Study

This acknowledgement that context has a great deal to do with *OHT* is undeniable from the evidence cited in this thesis. On the other hand, even this influence on the modern church is rapidly declining in light of the new media culture. Several years ago, in a study by Barna Research Group, they warned,

Clearly, our theological foundations are being rapidly eroded by the constant battering they take at the hands of a theologically inept society. Part of the change process relates to the emergence of new generations. Over time each generation mellows a bit from its radical youth views to more mainstream biblical views. But the theological starting point for young people entering adulthood is less and less bibliocentric.³

This statement points out exactly why the older generations' rigid adherence to *OHT* is challenging young people who often find themselves shut out emotionally and intellectually from the leadership or authorities in their churches. Even so, this insistence to maintain old cultural ideas or methodology is having a devastating effect on old and new churches that continue archaic generational practices.

It was Leighton Ford who caught the essence of how *OHT* could be warped to use for the wrong motives when he writes,

Jesus vision was radical as it was realistic. It was radical in that it enabled him to see through tradition and institutions to what lay at the heart of their original intent...Jesus saw through traditions and institutions in this radical way. That is, he saw right to the center and core of their meaning and purpose...During his ministry Jesus positively affirmed many traditions from the past. But he came into conflict—sometimes violent conflict—when he saw that a tradition or a system had

2. Caleb Kaltenbach, "How Paul Engaged Culture with His Preaching," Charisma Media Group, May 25, 2016, <https://ministrytodaymag.com/leadership/culture/22891-how-paul-engaged-culture-with-his-preaching>.

3. George Barna and Mark Hatch, *Boiling Point: How Coming Cultural Shifts Will Change Your Life* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2001), 198.

twisted a law and made it into a rigid legalism which could even end in cruelty to people.⁴

This is how *OHT* has often gone awry and corrupted leaders.

Specifically, within the *IOU COGOP*, there were many instances when preachers were trained to believe that only a few leaders from the higher ranks could give divine direction or utterances to guide the *COGOP*. This tendency is noted by a long-tenured pastor in the *IOU* who shares this confession:

During this time period, back in our church history, only a few good and godly individuals seemed to be deemed as the ones who laid down the path stones for all others to follow. There is no doubt that they were great men and women of God. Nonetheless, I believe the years have taught me that God raised up so many additional great men and women of God who could have helped us dramatically avoid structural, cultural, and geographic pitfalls, as well as provide fresh anointed insight. Years of faithfulness have also taught me that if we had worked together just a little bit better and been more respectful of the God and Holy Spirit in each of us, we could have been exponentially more effective and productive in what God called us to be.⁵

Indeed, there is still large amounts of authoritarianism and top-down management tendency that persist in organizations where *OHT* was embraced so passionately. Yes, biblical and theological foundations that are securely developed through sound exegetical processes and culturally contextualized methods can help diminish these pitfalls. But, the interviews in chapter four have certainly concurred with the urgent need to make adjustments to past practices.

The *COGOP* has often in the past emphasized prophetic utterances to justify certain rites or traditional beliefs. This has been factually supported by *COGOP* historical interpretation of Scripture and demonstrates its lasting impact on some of our preaching.

4. Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership: Jesus' Way of Creating Vision, Shaping Values & Empowering Change* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 112.

5. Robert J. Miller, "Reflections of Thirty Plus Years in the IOU Region," *The Vision Sentinel*, Roseburg, OR, December 2017, 3.

The importance of balancing historical context with the theological context is redacted in a straightforward statement about prophetic messages and religious practices that punctuated Israel's thinking:

The nation is relying on *religious ritualism* instead of relationship. The people have forgotten that ritual is the means to the relationship, not a substitute for relationship. As Israel becomes more enamored with formalized ritual, they lose concept of relationship with the Lord. They trivialize the significance of his Presence in their midst. They think that only ritual is required of them. They draw illogical conclusion that proper ritual will cover over other covenant violations like social justice and idolatry. They rationalize their social injustice and their syncretism by focusing on the cultic ritual.⁶

While the *IOU COGOP* has generally moved beyond this *religious ritualism* produced by past *OHT* practices, there are still strong pockets of resistance that cling to old dogma, structural stagnation, and preaching methodologies developed within long-held traditions. In chapter four, the surveys of ministers highlighted some of these monumental systemic practices that continue to hinder effective change in their preaching rituals, ministerial contexts, and leadership methodologies.

Neutrality was imperative to this examination of *OHT* and the *IOU COGOP*, because so many other factors have been attacking the church and families in the twenty-first century. This thesis would be reticent not to reference other issues. Sincere examiners of this subject would need to explore one powerful element that is impacting the beliefs of people. The investigation by Barna Research Group cited earlier in this section yields ample proof for this:

The long-term outcome, of course, is that we will continue to see biblical truth lost in the cacophony of feel-good messages that fill the market-place and seduce people. Jesus' exhortation for us to be in the world but not of it must include the commitment to provide people with His truths and principles in every forum available. Our studies show that the greatest theological influences in people's

6. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2005), 375.

lives are their family, their peers, and the mass media. Certain church experiences when people are young (typically preteen) may also leave lasting impressions. The evidence is mounting that the Church, if it chooses to retreat to a Sunday-morning offensive, will continue to lose its hold on people's minds and hearts.⁷

There is no equivocating that *OHT*, while powerful in past generations, is losing both its positive and negative impact on the last three generations.

Final Summary of the Study of *OHT* in the *COGOP IOU* Region

There was a definite turning point in this project when the study of oral history/theology became more than a simple belief that the inclusion of *OHT* was either right or wrong. The evidence began to stack up profoundly that some *OHT* had very beneficial effects, yet frequently ended up producing a matching and wide-ranging set of problems for preachers who relied too heavily on it. At this juncture, anyone who is honest enough to admit that sometimes theology is not as clean or free from past traditions will acknowledge that Christians often find it hard to separate fact from myth.

Historian Bruce Shelley writes about this quandary:

Many modern Christians would rather not discuss the central teachings of Christianity. They are not sure that ideas about religion—or theology—are all that important. 'I love flowers,' a minister once said, 'but I hate botany; I love religion, but I hate theology.' This widespread attitude often springs from good reasons. Theology can be dull, or much worse, it can be ruthless. In Christianity, however, the answer to bad theology can never be no theology. It must be good theology. God gave us minds, and he surely expects us to use them in thinking about truth.⁸

Unfortunately, *OHT* can contain both good and bad theology. As this study discovered, this predicament needs to be confessed.

7. Barna and Hatch, *Boiling Point*, 199.

8. Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 3rd ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 47.

Moving toward a summary of this thesis requires weighing the evidence of writers, considering the impact of the past traditions and history passed along through generations, and listening to the present mindsets of preachers who carry the message. As the interviews and surveys revealed,⁹ not everyone understands what it is they believe. This situation is echoed within the epilogue of the above cited history book on Christianity:

Surely one of the more remarkable aspects of Christianity today is how few of these professed believers have ever seriously studied the history of their religion. In an earlier age, adherents of one faith seldom encountered adherents of another. Few were required to defend their religion against the criticisms of a rival faith. In our day, however, when mass media makes the world our neighborhood, the ignorance of Christians is hard to justify.¹⁰

This certainly describes the situation in the *IOU COGOP* region. In a recent course taught on the “History and Doctrine of the Church of God of Prophecy,”¹¹ students from the *COGOP* were unable to answer many questions about their very own denomination. Most of these students had been in this church for more than twenty, thirty, and some as long as forty years.

This recent revelation reminded me of a discovery from earlier research:

There comes a point in time when every person’s life and thinking must move from the known or the understood into a discovery that will require unearthing truths they had not perceived before. Call it revelation, call it conversion, call it a vision, you can even call it *anagnorisis* (Greek: ‘in a literary work, the startling discovery that produces a change from ignorance to knowledge’);¹² but there comes a summit in your journey when reaching the maturity or completeness that life can give you will demand more than what you have understood, presently know, or what you have striven in the past to achieve.¹³

9. Pratt, *Survey on Preaching*, 1-4.

10. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 501.

11. Wallace Pratt, “The History and Doctrine of the Church of God of Prophecy” (lecture, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Consortium, Kirkland, WA, June 7-10, 2018).

12. *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 15th ed., s.v. “Anagnorisis.”

13. Wallace Pratt, *The Turning Point That Changed Everything: Choosing to Accept the Unpredictable* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2009), 185.

This kind of discovery is something that preachers over the last twenty-five years have struggled with in the *COGOP*; they are still wrestling with the reformation of their church and its historical importance.

If there is one central factor that has emerged from this study, it is the on-going transition that is taking place in the mindset and attitudes of the *IOU COGOP*. Many pastors are still seeking to understand many of their beliefs passed on to them about the church through *OHT*. Karl Rahner, a Roman Catholic theologian, makes an observation that thoroughly applies to any church that has held to an exclusive mentality in their preaching:

But on the other hand we also have to see just as clearly that the doctrine of the church and of its social constitution is not the core of the ultimate truth of Christianity. There continues to exist right up to our own times an ecclesial consciousness of a militant kind which is a reaction to the individualism of the nineteenth century, a militant ecclesiality which is tempted to make ecclesiality the most specific and central thing about Christianity in an indiscriminate way.¹⁴

Such a claim is more than a Roman Catholic challenge. No summary could be complete without recognition that this militancy existed in the *COGOP* and struck hard against any individual who challenged the collective consciousness throughout the greater corpus of her global ecclesia.

This reality reverberates back to a statement often used in many forms of official communique from the General Overseer's preaching:

The Bible allows for only one Church with unity of government, doctrine and purpose. From the confusion of doctrines and practices, there must come a unified organization to carry out the work of God in these last days. Of all the groups, *there must be one that can be singled out as the Bible Church* (italics added) operating according to the Bible plan of organization and accepting the Bible as

14. Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2013), 324.

the Word of God, rightly divided, with the New Testament as the only rule of faith and practice, government and discipline, with perfect unity as its goal.¹⁵

This was first published as a sermon entitled “The Unity of the Church” in the official publication of the Church of God of Prophecy called “The White Wing Messenger.” By their own admission, most of the *IOU COGOP* ministers preached this exact sermon consistently and often in their pulpits.

Contrariwise, most of the *IOU* pastors would no longer endorse such an unequivocal or exclusive proclamation but would declare they are striving to be a genuine expression of the body of Christ. The up-to-date official mission statement of the *IOU COGOP* states,

The Church of God of Prophecy is firm in its commitment to orthodox Christian belief. We affirm that there is one God eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe in the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, His sinless life, the physical miracles He performed, His atoning death upon the Cross, His bodily resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and His personal return in power and glory at His second coming. We profess that regeneration by the Holy Spirit is essential for the salvation of sinful mankind. We believe the sinner is brought to an awareness of the need for salvation through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. We believe that in sanctification by the blood of Christ, one is made holy. We affirm the present, active ministry of the Holy Spirit who guides the Church and by whose indwelling and empowerment we are able to live godly lives and render effective service to God and others. We believe in the oneness and ultimate unity of believers for which our Lord prayed, and that this should be visibly displayed ‘that the world may know, see, and believe’ God’s glory, the coming of His Son, and the great love He has for His people (John 17:20–23).¹⁶

The above mission statement is insightful of changes occurring in the *IOU COGOP* but should not be assumed as reflective of the whole. There are preachers who still retain the old mindset. The last fortress of *OHT* in the *COGOP* that will need to be

15. M. A. Tomlinson, *The Glorious Church of God* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1968), 113.

16. Church of God of Prophecy, Idaho, Oregon, Utah, and the Navajo Nation, Official Regional Website 2018, <http://www.cogop-iou.org/who-is-the-cogop/>.

overcome will deal more with the past obsession with a glorious self-identity that often did not reflect the suffering of the cross; this temptation has enticed all of Pentecostalism to some degree. Victory and glory were the words that identified the rallying cry in *COGOP* conventions and assemblies. The words of Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen remind us of any misguided self-adulation:

The theology of glory seeks to know God directly in his majesty and power, whereas the theology of the cross paradoxically recognizes him precisely where he has hidden himself: in his sufferings and in all that which men and women consider to be weakness and foolishness. In this way, the theology of the cross destroys man's self-confidence and at the same time elevates God. God is free and sovereign to do whatever he wishes.¹⁷

As this statement indicates, the 'name it and claim it' faith movement and the *OHT* language of 'glory and victory' that promoted exclusivity, were alike in their rush to elevate '*theologia gloriae*'. While the former movement seems to still be strong in the third-world, it too will fade in the light of truth.

Conclusion Drawn from Research, Surveys, and Interviews

At the close of chapter four, I posed thirteen questions that need to be addressed if this study is to be meaningful and applicable to our present preaching ministries. The first one refers to the *complexities or challenges of preaching within a culture or tradition*. In all of our state biblical institutes in Idaho, Oregon, and Utah, we have started to examine how we can identify these complexities and challenges. Almost all of our class presentations or pastoral conferences now allow small groups composed of male and female participants around tables to enter times of joint discussion and prayer. These

17. Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies, *The Spirit and Spirituality: Essays in Honour of Russell P. Spittler* (New York, NY: T & T Clark International, 2004), 157.

efforts are beginning to demonstrate very favorable responses and increased awareness of how their preaching and ministry must adjust to be effective within their emerging and changing cultural environments.

This leads us to the second question regarding *adherence to the biblical text and less parroting of unchallenged COGOP dogma*. Through the origination of establishing a Pacific Northwest Consortium of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 2008, there has been a remarkable 35 students in the *IOU* involved in this program of Christian education. This ignited an entire philosophical transition in the *IOU COGOP* Region that further led to ten students who have graduated with the Master of Arts degree and a subsequent decline in over-dependence on past *OHT* practices in the preaching ministry of these students.¹⁸

The third question that was harvested from reading interviews of preachers in the *IOU COGOP* dealt with whether *those who had been ministering for over twenty years in pastoral positions felt they were trained properly before entering ministry*. Every preacher who responded to the surveys and interviews lamented the lack of formalized or adequate preparation to preach. While they shared this disappointment, there was voiced an overwhelming sorrow and regret that the older women ministers had been ignored and not given the same opportunity to learn more about homiletics.¹⁹ The emphasis given them in the last decade has been turning around in the *IOU COGOP* region as five women have now graduated from *GCTS* and ten others are approaching this goal. Also,

18. Denver Race, "Church of God of Prophecy: Roots for the Future" (Research Paper, History and Theology of the Church of God of Prophecy, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary HMP Consortium, Boise, ID, 2018), 5.

19. Francisco Avila, "History and Doctrine of the COGOP: Women in Church History" (Research Paper, History and Theology of the Church of God of Prophecy, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary HMP Consortium, Boise, ID: 2018), 5.

as female ministers have been making advances, so have older male ministers with nine of them who are over age fifty in the *GCTS* program.

The fourth question that emerged from this study was the over-reliance of the *COGOP* on *institutional, traditional and cultural precedence in the founding pioneers*. The returned surveys were marked repeatedly that this was the case.²⁰ The chief concern was how to get pastors to address this past problem without causing them to discard good traditions or sound fundamentals that were passed down through the *COGOP*. The *IOU* has been addressing this pivotal issue by taking time to train them in the state biblical institutes to recognize the good and bad while retaining favorable aspects of the *OHT*. Great strides have resulted in only five years.

Pondering the fifth question addressed the habit of *learning their beliefs about preaching from family, other pastors, and peers*. In the newer generations born since 1980, this has not been a major problem. Studies show that the opposite is frequently the case as these emerging generations are too inclined to reject their parents and pastors' ideas, while they are too disposed to follow the thinking of their peers.²¹ To address this rising trend, in the last three years in the *IOU*, we invited younger emerging preachers to attend at no cost a Pastors' Enrichment Weekend where they were provided teaching and mature role models who have learned balanced homiletics.

As stated in chapter four, there is also a sixth question that should follow-up question five, this has to do with *congregants who have little or no theological understanding based on the Bible*. There is a serious dilemma in churches where this remains the typical condition.

20. Pratt, *Survey on Preaching*, 2.

21. Barna and Hatch, *Boiling Point*, 203.

The expositor Craddock has discerned properly the importance of preachers learning the habits of their people and learning how to address these in a productive manner without being offensive.²² In addition, this is applicable to realizing people learn more than we realize through observation. In the present and future, pastors and other ministers will need to take the time to learn the habits that help or hinder congregants. They must begin to *live-out* before them good personal biblical exegesis. Experience has shown that years of exposure to certain preaching exegesis, content, style, and methodology is learned or relearned by consistency and time.

The seventh area that needs to be addressed deals with whether *education can affect personality and integrity*. In the eighty surveys submitted in the *IOU COGOP* region, the majority of participants conceded to that belief.²³ To take this one step further, a study in Germany indicates that even among adolescents that increased education has impacted not only their personality, but improved integrity in their lives.²⁴ Firsthand experience with pastors has also demonstrated that preachers who pour themselves into their educational studies exhibit improved personality and propensity to increased character.

Question eight was created as a result of research on this project on preaching; there must be a systematic approach to *the training of Emerging Leaders in the IOU COGOP*. At the last Pastoral Enrichment Weekend,²⁵ the presiding bishop met with the

22. Fred B. Craddock, *Craddock on the Craft of Preaching* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2011), 174-175.

23. Pratt, *Survey on Preaching*, 3.

24. Sarah Dahmann and Silke Anger, *The Impact of Education on Personality: Evidence from a German High School Reform*, discussion paper #8139 (Bonn, Germany: University of Bamberg and IZA, 2004), <http://ftp.iza.org/dp8139.pdf>.

25. Frank Avila, *Minutes of the State Presbyters Meeting for Attracting Emerging Leaders* (Seaside, OR: Shilo Inn Oceanside Conference Center, October 19-21, 2018), 2-4.

six state presbyters for the *IOU COGOP* region for three days to strategize and plan a series of three “Leadership and Ministerial Forums” in Autumn 2019. These are being purposefully designed to facilitate training in more effective preaching, as well as communication and involvement of younger leaders emerging in *COGOP* churches. There is a strong discernment and commitment that local churches will continue to lose post-high school youth if we do not increase instruction on how to attract and involve youth in the local church.

In the same meeting referred to above, the follow-up question concerning *providing a better understanding of cross-cultural needs and training* was fleshed-out. This was supported with the participation of 80 pastors and other regional leaders to discuss how and what we should implement to give greater understanding of why we need to be focused on cross-cultural ministry.²⁶ As consideration was being given to this challenge, an article was discovered that made an important statement to the group: “We need a radical reversal of our thinking, to focus on the outcomes of our trainees instead of curriculum, faculty credentials, administrators, facilities, and library. What knowledge, attitudes, and skills do we want our candidates to have as they enter missionary service?”²⁷

Acknowledging this reversal of thinking is part of the solution. While recent meetings have highlighted this need, leaders have begun to approach the subject of how it could be done. Pastors in this study recognized and wanted to measure the following: *How has the last ten years of the influence of GCTS and three years of state biblical*

26. Avila, *Minutes of the State Presbyters Meeting*, 5-6.

27. William D. Taylor, “How Shall We Equip the Cross-cultural Force?” *Missio Nexus*, July 1, 1993, <https://missionexus.org/how-shall-we-equip-the-cross-cultural-force/#>.

institutes impacted OHT in this region. The in-depth interviews²⁸ made it clear that the participants believed strongly that it has made a difference in their past beliefs gleaned from *OHT* and that it now continues to stimulate their mindsets. Returning to the status quo is no longer desired by them.

Under the category of questions eleven and twelve (chapter four), there was an intentional reference to the years of *OHT* inducement that came down from the *COGOP* International Offices (I/O). *Did leaders feel that the IO grasped the understanding of the challenges facing preachers today?* The participants felt overwhelmingly a gulf between the top and the bottom levels of leaders.²⁹ This outcome made us aware that we must establish excellent relationships and trust with pastors, as well as with other ministers to be able to impact them in a positive manner that could foster better attitudes, exegesis, and practices in their preaching.

The last subject that needed to be addressed as a result of research deals with the necessity for *a counterbalance between OHT and the modernity that has been exhibited historically in the IOU region.* It is an undeniable detail that all of the research and study done for this project has unearthed the chasm existing between these two prevailing forces. There must be a conscious and careful process to make sure that leadership in the *IOU COGOP* region does not simply bounce back from one extreme to the other. Os Guinness cautions,

For if the anti-Christian forces prevail, they represent nothing less than a return to the philosophy, the ethics and the lifestyles of the pagan world that Christians overcame originally. In other words, today's challenge rivals that of the fateful clash of the early church with the Caesars in the first three centuries and the menace of the sultans of Ottoman Islam in the sixteenth. The challenge described here amounts to a grand showdown for the Western church as a whole. But it is

28. Pratt, *Pastoral In-depth Interviews*, 34-35.

29. Pratt, *Pastoral In-depth Interviews*, 32-33.

also urgent that Christians and others outside the West appreciate the strategic global importance of the crisis of the West and the Western church and their vital part in responding to it. For one thing, the same challenge is coming to the rest of the world, for everyone will soon face similar problems as their own countries and regions modernize.³⁰

Preachers must begin to recognize this danger and simply not preach against *OHT* and leave their congregations vulnerable to a more lethal poison on the other hand. There must be a balance that retains the good points of *OHT* without caving into every form of modernity.

Finally, as each of these thirteen questions were considered and weighed for importance, there developed an area that requires deeper assessment. The movement of philosophy and religion through the test of modernity and post-modernism will have to revisit an old eighteenth century theology. Overlooked and under-evaluated, the Populist Theology is again raising its dangerous ideology among Generations Y and Z (those born after 1981). Basically, Populism encapsulated one dangerous pronouncement: “I profess in reality, and trust I am sincere in the profession, that I mean to yield to the power and force of truth, whenever it appears such to me, let it be advanced by whom it will; but determine to think and judge myself, and call in religious matters, no man father.”³¹ This simple statement opens a pandora’s box. As preachers contemplate this new threat that has reawakened in the West, they will soon realize that some forms of *OHT* are latent with an old theology that will find fertile soil in the younger minds today. Mark Knoll reminds us that this ideology that promotes ‘no respect of persons’ encourages ordinary men and women to treat their own religious or spiritual experiences with as much respect

30. Os Guinness, *Impossible People: The Greatest Challenge* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 3.

31. E. Brooks Holifield, “Mercersburg, Princeton, and the South: The Sacramental Controversy in the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 54 (Summer 1976): 238.

as the directives of their traditional beliefs.³² This thinking unleashes an individualistic and self-sufficiency above anything passed on by others in their family, faith, or community. This sounds innocent enough until you realize that populism pays homage to no other religion, tradition, church or even to the supremacy of Scriptures. It is a secular religion of self-actualization that plays into the post-modern plurality dominating western society and aims to overtake the global mindset. Therefore, as we move carefully away from total reliance on *OHT*, we will need to retain faith in the Word of God as the final authority above self-sufficiency and individualism that many now embrace.

Implementing Effective Solutions for the Future

There is a crisis looming on the horizon as many in the older generations still cling to archaic remnants of *OHT*, while simultaneously the emerging generations march toward a growing philosophical attitude of relativism. This clash requires wisdom and relational bridge-building that will keep the extremes of absolutism and relativism from gaining control, even in the preaching ministry. This challenge will necessitate the implementation of effective solutions for the future. This certainty is acknowledged by many scholars and pastors. A perceptive observation sums it up in a concise manner: “A generation ago, the neglect of Christianity in academic teaching made more sense than it does today, in that students could be expected to absorb information about the faith from churches, families, or society at large. Today, though, that is often not a realistic expectation, and one encounters dazzling levels of ignorance about the basic facts of the

32. Mark A. Knoll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 144-145.

religion.”³³ When I mused over this project, the effects of *OHT* were very entrenched in the aging leadership and preaching of the *IOU COGOP*, but in the last two years there has been a noticeable growth in a younger generation of leadership impacted by post-modernism and plurality that is just as disturbing. If we move emerging preachers away from the missteps of *OHT*, then we also must deal with a risk of shifting to an ideology that will be just as unreliable and destructive. Indeed, this will certainly be the fragile ground we will need to travel through to get them to a final acceptance of sound exegetical faith anchored on the Scriptures and illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

This development is evident by another reflection by Philip Jenkins:

Britain offers a singularly clear example of an emerging post-Christian society. Since people have moved to religious indifference rather than active participation in some other faith, the abandonment of Christianity is difficult to measure accurately. Still, useful indicators are provided by the growing popularity of practices once condemned by the church, including cremation of the dead, which accounts for about 70 percent of all British funerals in a given year. Over half of the weddings in Britain in a typical year are civil, with no religious element whatever.³⁴

Examples like this cannot be ignored as we ponder how to implement effective solutions for the future. There must be an answer that considers the past failings of *OHT* and builds on the strong pillars of it that helped contribute to the steadfast faith of many Pentecostals who were recipients of the blessings and comforts it provided. Undoubtedly, the apostle Paul encounters this quandary, “So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter” (2 Thessalonians 2:15, ESV).

33. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 215.

34. Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 95.

Many years ago, the sage of ethics and Christian consciousness, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, wrestled with the opposing forces that still confront those who are 'called' to preach the truth in any given age. He was concerned about those who were called and given authority by God be the clarions of their generation. He warned them not lose their moral compass and respect for all authorities that God had established on earth for them. The pastor of the 'Confessing Church' witnessed the struggle of the church with changing times, traditions, and values that were confronting Christians. Bonhoeffer declared,

The authorization to speak is conferred from above on the Church, the family, labour, and government, only so long as they do not encroach upon each other's domains and only so long as they give effect to God's commandment in conjunction and collaboration with one another and each in its own way. No single one of these authorities can exclusively identify itself with the commandment of God. The supremacy of the commandment of God is shown precisely by the fact that it juxtaposes and coordinates these authorities in a relation of mutual opposition and complementarity and that it is only in this multiplicity of concrete correlations and limitations that the commandment of God takes effect as the commandment which is manifest in Jesus Christ.³⁵

Do these cautions apply only to the balance between government, family, and the church, or can it also apply to post-modernism, biblical theology, *OHT* and the Holy Spirit illumination? I believe it does. The challenge is enormous in the post-modern culture to assume that the individual can simply believe or do whatever they want. Such philosophy will pale in light of Christian ethics. Those who insist we live simply by post-modern relativism, or by their cultural history, or whatever they believe the Holy Spirit is telling them, or by a particular theological bent, will need to bring themselves into a harmonious synchronization of all these elements to make sure none of them or a collective group of them would violate the commandments of God. Therefore, this is the

35. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1955), 275.

way forward to find solutions for the future that we can implement for the improvement of the *IOU COGOP* region.

Just how will all of the implementation of these solutions work? Back at the end of the twentieth century, Charles Colson, whom many Pentecostals and other Christians labeled a modern-day prophet, saw on the horizon an opportunity unfolding because of the new willingness to consider some kind of morality to avoid a complete breakdown or disintegration of social and spiritual protections. He wrote,

This new openness to moral arguments gives Christians an extraordinary opportunity to make our case that living according to the biblical moral order is healthier for both individuals and society. And there's a growing body of scientific evidence we can use to back up our argument. Medical studies are confirming that those who attend church regularly and act consistently with their faith are better off, both physically and mentally.³⁶

His argument is more than rhetoric or philosophizing. If this was true at the end of the last century, then it is even more applicable in the twenty-first century. One of the key components to finding solutions that will help us transition from the weaknesses of *OHT* and the evolving dangers of post-modernism must entail better equipping of pastors and other leaders. The following scriptural passage beckons to this essential function of training:

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:12-16, ESV)

311. 36. Charles Colson, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999),

As referenced earlier in this chapter, the *IOU COGOP* region is preparing to implement an exhaustive training beginning in October of 2019. Each Ministerial and Leadership Forum will be held for three days over three weekends in Idaho, Oregon, and Utah. In these venues, we will deal specifically with the style, content, and delivery methods of preaching that will begin to address where we want to help pastors and ministerial leaders to know and understand the new challenges of homiletics. Furthermore, we will be focusing on how they can ‘pass on the mantle’ of leadership by preparing a new generation to deal with past and present hindrances to effective communication. This will not be a one-time forum opportunity, but this will be an on-going pattern of instruction and mentoring that will equip present and future leaders to engage the cultures they minister within. In addition, we are inviting future leaders to these venues.

Timothy Galpin gives a vital lesson on how churches and organizations need to develop good communication plans. In his excellent presentation, he lists five underlying principles that should guide our efforts:

- 1) Messages should be linked to the strategic purpose of the change initiative.
- 2) Communications should be realistic and honest.
- 3) Communications must be proactive rather than reactive.
- 4) Messages should be repeated consistently through varying channels.
- 5) Avenues of two-way communication are needed to help ensure successful implementation of the changes, that is, feedback mechanisms must be established.³⁷

These points about effective communication have been determined by the *IOU COGOP* plurality, that includes the presiding bishop and his six bilingual state presbyters, as essential for meaningful solutions. Further implementation of this strategy involves

37. Timothy J. Galpin, *The Human Side of Change: A Practical Guide to Organizational Redesign* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1996), 39-41.

holding pastors accountable to continue this process in their local churches with their leaders and congregations.

Preparing to implement effective solutions for the future cannot be done sloppily and without advanced planning. The veracity of this reality was impressed upon me by the following leadership principle:

Spinning wheels gather no traction. There are times when we need to be more discerning and more strategic in our responses and when the quick move to action will consume a good amount of energy but will produce few, if any, results...it may be more productive to ask the right question or to find the right approach than to swing into action and try to change things.³⁸

Therefore, the *IOU COGOP* plurality leadership team continues to schedule video conference calls to discuss and strategize how to make effective changes. This group began by praying, planning and weighing out the appropriate materials and instructors who could guide our pastors and leaders through the maze of challenges that will face them as they seek actual and lasting solutions. They will meet in the regional office in January 2019 to continue developing and analyzing more concrete plans. The goal will not be just to inform and form new methodology and content in preaching, but to aid them in implementing changes that may be necessary in local church education venues and activities.

Finally, resolving long-practiced traditions or values in the *OHT* will necessitate patience and persistence. Unless any group of leaders are committed to also helping people change their values, then we are simply implementing programs and training that will fail in the long run. In light of this reality, the administrative leadership in the *IOU COGOP* has counseled together and determined that *value training* will be the first

38. Gilbert R. Rendle, *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders* (Durham, NC: The Alban Institute, 1998), 134.

priority of the upcoming Ministerial and Leadership Forums. Values are formed over time and this is especially applicable concerning principles and ideas. Jim Powell seizes this certainty by stating: “Unified healthy values are biblically consistent values that may be written or unwritten; they may be consciously or unconsciously held. They are present in the hearts of the leadership and a majority of the people. When a church has unified healthy values consistently in place, their culture is healthier, and their potential Kingdom influence is enhanced.”³⁹

With the above stated principle, the future resolution of the issues presented in this project will include assisting preachers and churches to approach the subject of values, culture, *OHT*, and improved biblical exegesis, as part of the process to grow spiritually, socially, knowledgeably, and numerically. As the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church: “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?-- unless indeed you fail to meet the test!” (2 Corinthians 13:5). Indeed, the solution will come through a process of examinations of where a preacher or group has been, where they are now, and where they are going.

Looking forward, it would be advantageous to examine more carefully the *COGOP* on the African Continent to learn more about how *OHT* intermingled into the culture and tradition of our preachers and churches in that region of the world. Therefore, I have planned a research trip there in December of 2019 to explore more on this subject with the *COGOP* General Presbyter Stephen Masilela and the leadership in southern Africa. This will enable a deeper and broader understanding of the influence of *OHT*.

39. Jim Powell, *Dirt Matters: The Foundation for a Healthy, Vibrant, and Effective Congregation* (Bloomington, ID: West Bow Press, 2013), 22.

APPENDIX 1

Mailed Survey and Numerical Composite Scores



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April 1, 2018

Dear Minister: You are receiving this survey with a request that you help me in a study that I am doing on behalf of my doctoral thesis. Your individual surveys and answers will remain confidential; they will be used in the writing of a doctoral thesis for Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary regarding preaching in the Church of God of Prophecy. There are no right or wrong answers; give your honest answers about your preaching. Give only one answer to each question. Thank you for helping me in writing a paper that is well informed on a minister's view about preaching. If you have any questions, please call or write me. If you return this survey, it is understood that you give consent for me to use it in compiling general results, but without disclosing your name or identity. Do not write your name anywhere on the survey or the return envelope. I need this survey returned by April 30, 2018. Thank you for your assistance!

Your Spouse-

1. Do you consider your spouse's opinions or feedback important to your increased effectiveness as a preacher? Please check one answer below:
 - ☐ Yes - 56
 - ☐ No - 4
 - ☐ Sometimes - 20
 - ☐ Never – 0
2. Have you ever asked your spouse what he or she thought of your sermon?
 - ☐ Yes - 74
 - ☐ No - 1
 - ☐ Sometimes - 5
 - ☐ Never – 0
3. Does your spouse's reaction or presence help you when you are preaching?
 - ☐ Yes - 30
 - ☐ No -15
 - ☐ Sometimes- 30
 - ☐ Never – 5

Your Race or Ethnicity-

4. Please write in your ethnic and racial background, and the nation of your birth:
 - Race: Western European- 25, Latin- 30, Slavic- 10, Native American- 10, African- 5
 - Ethnicity- Native American- 10, Mexican- 16, C. American- 10, S. American- 4, Russian- 2, Ukrainian- 8, Anglo/Saxon- 25, Swathi- 5
 - Nation of Origin- (where you were born?) All 80 participants in the survey were from the United States, Russia, Ukraine, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Peru, Columbia, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and the Congo/Zimbabwe
5. Do you believe that your cultural background, race or ethnicity has ever been a hindrance to your preaching?
 - Yes - 28
 - No - 34
 - Sometimes - 18
 - Never - 0
6. Do you think that your cultural background, race, or ethnicity has influenced how you preach or teach a congregation?
 - Yes - 31
 - No - 24
 - Sometimes - 21
 - Never - 4
7. Is your voice or mannerisms in the pulpit effected by your cultural background, race or ethnicity?
 - Yes - 26
 - No - 24
 - Sometimes - 28
 - Never - 2
8. Does the cultural background, race or ethnicity of your audience affect your preaching?
 - Yes- 28
 - No - 24
 - Sometimes - 26
 - Never – 2

Your Temperament or Personality-

9. How would you describe your temperament in your dealing with people?
 - Extroverted or Outgoing - 33
 - Introverted or Timid - 8
 - Assertive/ Loud - 4
 - Relational/ Personal – 35

10. How would other people describe your temperament or style of preaching?

- Fearful - 1
- Authoritative - 8
- Confident - 24
- Strong - 24
- Reluctant/Nervous - 5
- Relational – 18

Your Education-

11. Please check the highest level of your education below:

- Elementary School - 6
- High School Graduate - 20
- Technical Institute - 20
- College Bachelor's Degree - 27
- Master of Arts Degree - 6
- Doctoral Degree - 1

12. Do you think education is a positive influence in your preaching?

- Yes - 53
- No - 3
- Sometimes - 24

13. Where do you get most of your information that you use in preaching?

- The Bible Only - 9
- The Bible and Other Christian Books - 45
- The Internet - 15
- Other Preachers - 9
- Spouse or Family - 1
- Peers (close friends) – 1

Your Integrity-

14. Have you ever used a false story (exaggerate) about yourself in your preaching?

- Yes - 12
- No - 53
- Sometimes - 12
- Never - 3

15. Do you believe that your character has an influence on how others view your preaching?

- Yes - 55
- No - 0
- Sometimes - 15
- Never - 0

16. Have you ever used personal information about another person at the church in the pulpit?
- Yes - 21
 - No - 21
 - Sometimes - 11
 - Never - 3
 - Maybe - 24
17. In preaching, do you quote your sources from other sermons by *COGOP* ministers?
- Yes - 36
 - No - 4
 - Sometimes - 30
 - Never – 0

Your Traditions and Customs-

18. Have the traditions or customs you learned as a child affected the way you preach?
- Yes - 36
 - No - 16
 - Sometimes - 28
 - Never - 0
19. Do you believe that a minister must have the anointing of the Holy Spirit when preaching?
- Yes - 80
 - No - 0
 - Sometimes - 0
 - Never - 0
20. Who has had the greatest influence over the years in your preaching?
- Mother or Father - 24
 - Your Pastor when you were a child or teenager - 5
 - A Preaching Mentor - 27
 - Your Church - 18
 - The College or Seminary you graduated from – 6

Your General Observation-

21. What is your attitude or belief about preaching?
- I do not like to preach - 0
 - I love to preach - 58
 - I sometimes like to preach - 18
 - I never like preaching – 4

Remember, please return by no later than April 30, 2018. Thank you for your help!

APPENDIX 2

Informed Consent Form

RESEARCHER: Wallace R. Pratt

RESEARCH SUBJECT: HOW ORAL HISTORY-THEOLOGY HAS FORMED THE
PREACHING MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY FOR
OREGON, IDAHO, AND UTAH

METHOD: Personal Interview

DATE & PLACE: October 19-21, 2018 in the Pastors Enrichment Retreat at Seaside,
Oregon (Shilo Oceanfront Suites Hotel)

Bishop Pratt put the subject in focus and explained that he was interested in an overall interview of a pastoral minister with more than three years' experience in the IOU Church of God of Prophecy in the Idaho, Oregon, and Utah. I understand that there is no compensation associated with this study and that I was selected due to my knowledge and position as a minister for the Church of God of Prophecy. All risks connected with this interview are assumed by me and I do so voluntarily as a participant in this research. I committed to answering questions Dr. Pratt would ask and to hold in confidence any of our discussions related to this project, but do give permission to be cited in his doctoral thesis regarding preaching in the COGOP.

My signature (below) indicates that this research study has been explained to me, that my questions have been answered, and that I agreed to take part in the study. I have received a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed):

Date: _____

Signature of Participant

Researcher's Statement

I have discussed the above points with the participant. It is my opinion that he or she understands the risks, benefits, and procedures involved in participating in this research study.

Date: _____

Researcher's Signature

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COGOP Assembly Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee for 18 years

Published Works:

Author of the *Turning Point that Changed Everything* in 2010

Author of the *Biblical Institute of Marriage* for the *COGOP* 2006 Assembly

Author of *The Pursuit of the Holy God* for the *COGOP* 2014 Assembly

Author of over 40 articles for the *White Wing Messenger*

Family: Wife- Judith Rae Pratt, two daughters Cherry and Melissa, their husbands Lance and Jesús, as well 5 grandchildren (Nolan, Matthew, Ryan, Micah and Katie).